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## LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

### CLIVE SINCLAIR

*The Brothers Singer*  
176pp. Allison and Busby. £8.95.  
085012752

### I. J. SINGER

*The Brothers Ashkenazi*  
176pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95.  
085015174

### ESTHER KREITMAN

*Deborah*  
166pp. Virago. £3.95.  
085063257

"Der grovner keved, ves di shvedishe student bet mir ongeton, iz oykh an unekening fun yiddish - a loshn fun glay, on a land, on grenetsen, nisht geystlich fun keyn shum melukhe." With this, the first Yiddish sentence ever spoken at a Nobel Prize-giving ceremony, Isaac Bashevis Singer accepted the award for Literature as an honour conferred not only upon him as a distinguished and distinctive author, but also upon the Yiddish language; a language of the Diaspora, without a country, without frontiers, and unsupported by any state. This happened on December 8, 1978. Many years before, Bashevis's brother Israel had tried to renounce that language, publicly proclaiming that he had ceased to be a Yiddish writer - only to find that the language would not let him be, that he had to return to it if he wanted to say what he knew he must. As for Bashevis (let us call him by that name, adapted from that of his mother, and refer to his elder brother as "Joshua"), he never lost his conviction that even if the majority of his readers regarded his works in translation, he himself would ever be bound to the subtly expressive language whose roots he had so often been proclaimed. "When I came to this country," he said, "I was an American questioner in 1975. I told the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, where I applied for a job, that I would like a steady job. He didn't see how this was possible, since in five or ten years Yiddish would be gone. Then he gave me an assignment, and it's already forty years since I asked for that job, and the paper is still there and we still have Yiddish readers and young people studying Yiddish. From a

## The First Family of Yiddish

S. S. Prawer

logical point of view Yiddish should have been dead two hundred years ago. But from the same point of view not a thread should be left of the Jewish people. Just the same, here we are . . .

The titles of the Singers' novels and stories are so memorable that writers of biographies and critical studies are constantly tempted to adapt them. *The Spinners of Market Street* has suggested *The Spinners of Canal Street*; *The Magician of Lublin* is responsible for *The Magician of West 84th Street*; and now we have a new critical study which alludes to *The Brothers Ashkenazi* by calling itself *The Brothers Singer*. Ironically enough, however, the very first sentence of the first chapter reads: "Pinches Mendel and Bathsheba had four children: Esther, Joshua, Bashevis and Moshe." There was a sister, then, and one who, as it turns out, plays a not unimportant part in Clive Sinclair's narrative. She too was a writer, and her precariously balanced (and sometimes unbalanced) personality made her an important model for such characters as the hysterical Rebekka in Bashevis's *Satan in Goray*. In it too fanciful to see in these Singer siblings, with their varied talents and constitutions, something of a Brontë constellation, with inverted genders, of course, and transported from Haworth parsonage to the family of a Polish rabbi? In that constellation Bashevis, whose imagination veers towards the strange and world, who is ever fascinated by psychological extremes and suggestions of the supernatural, could stand for Emily; Joshua, more realistic but by no means unromantic, for Charlotte; and Esther, of course, for poor Branwell.

Whether the youngest brother, Meshe, would in the end have turned writer too and have come to take on some correspondence to Anne, it is impossible to say - the Nazi murderers cut him off in his youth along with millions of others. How exciting it would be, however, if someone suddenly turned up a long-forgotten, clearly autobiographical novel from Brantwell's hand! But, needless to say, this is precisely what Clive Sinclair and Virago Books have given us in their re-issue of *Deborah*, the first novel Esther wrote. "Kreitman" is, of course, her married name. Her translator is her son, who changed his name from Kreitman to Carr, while the new translator of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* is Joshua's son Joseph, who

has also collaborated on versions of works by his uncle Bashevis. The Singers have the finest family tradition in modern Yiddish literature.

Clive Sinclair uses Esther's novel to excellent effect to supplement the three explicitly autobiographical works published by Joshua and Bashevis: *Of a World That Is No More*, *In My Father's Court*, and *A Little Boy in Search of God*. His own accomplishment as a novelist stands him in good stead: the Singers' parents and grandparents, as well as the four siblings themselves, become living presences as well-chosen quotations are interspersed with spare but always telling comment. The rural and urban landscapes through which these figures move, especially in their days in Poland, are evoked with elegance and a clarity that recall the photographs of Roman Vishniac, which have obviously been studied and which rightly figure in the bibliography appended to *The Brothers Singer*. Constantly and (for the most part) unforcedly, narrated fact and topographical detail - the sandy soil, for instance, on which the family home at Leoncin was built - become symbol or metaphor in Sinclair's narrative, and this procedure not only justifies itself by its success in this biography and critical study, but can also point to precedents in the Singers' own practice. One need only recall the way in which Bashevis, in *Why the Grass Shrieked*, made the windpipes of some recently slaughtered geese serve as a test case for a choice between his father's mysticism and his mother's rationality.

Various periods of the protagonists' lives in Bilgoray, Leoncin, Warsaw's Krochmalna Street, and New York, are distinguished and related to one another in meaningful sequence and juxtaposition; their fortunes in peace and war are told vividly and economically, but always in such a way that we see their connection with the literary output which clearly prompted Sinclair to write his book. Interesting enough in themselves, the incidents of childhood and adolescence related in the early chapters gather their true significance when we are led to see them as successive stages of a literary apprenticeship. We are shown, briefly but with just enough detail, how these children of an ultra-orthodox family combined or separated out the traits of their very disparate parents and grandparents, and how three of them

became estranged from the world of their elders through contact with secular learning and literature, with Darwinism, with socialism and with Zionism. It was this estrangement, ironically enough, which saved their lives. Esther, after an arranged marriage in Berlin and Antwerp that went disastrously wrong, landed in London with her son, Joshua and Bashevis found themselves drawn to New York, where they entered the orbit of Abe Cahan and his *Forwards* and settled as professional writers and journalists.

Clive Sinclair's narrative skill serves him equally well when he introduces his subjects' fiction. Esther's first novel (the only one discussed at all) gets somewhat short shrift in *The Brothers Singer*, where it is used mainly as an autobiographical document. (This brief treatment is usefully supplemented in Sinclair's introduction to the Virago reprint.) Plot-analyses are liberally interspersed with quotations from the works discussed, and description is constantly combined - as good literary criticism should be - with implicit valuation.

*Satan in Goray* begins as if it were a folk tale or legend. Chmolek is called wicked and Gorey is described as being "in the midst of the hills at the end of the world." Instead of opening with "once upon a time" the novel starts explicitly, "In the year 1648". Thus Bashevis establishes immediately his mode of working, a juxtaposition of the fantastic and the factual . . .

In *The Brothers Ashkenazi* history is a juggernaut, best represented by the advance of the Germans into Poland. The novel opens with a declaration of its epic intentions, even though the pioneers it follows are not Jews but Germans, en route to Poland in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. And what role did the Jews play in this march of history? As ever, they were spectators, "gathered" with wide open eyes to observe "the interminable line of carriages moving ceaselessly forward". A century later, history was repeated as another invading army rolled into Poland and once again the Jews "gazed with astonishment in their black eyes at the newcomers". This, as Saul Bellow has pointed out, is the traditional role of the Jews. *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, like *The Mayor* and *The Estate*, shows what happens

to those Jews who seize their chance and break with tradition; however, the power of this initial image already suggests their fate.

The mention of Bellow in the last quotation is characteristic; Sinclair several times throws his protagonists' work into relief by comparing it with writings by Peretz, I. J. Zevin ("Tashrak"), Abraham Cahan, Henry Roth, or Nathanael West. The same quotation also serves to indicate how successfully Sinclair relates the Singers' fictions to one another: he brings together, not only *The Mayor* and *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, but also *Yoshe Kalb*, *The Gentleman from Cracow*, and *Satan in Goray*, with mutually illuminating effect. It is all done succinctly and economically, and in such a way that the reader is stimulated to exert his own critical faculties along suggested lines. Sinclair's well-judged comments on the irony implicit in the title *Khover Nakhman*, for instance, inevitably lead us to reflect on other speaking names: the name "Lerner", given to the central protagonist of *Steel and Iron*, which brings into ironic play the resonances of traditional religious study that adhere to the Yiddish verb "lernen" but are absent from its English and German cognates; or the name "Solovitchik" (=nightingale), borne by the irresistibly charming seducer in *Khover Nakhman*.

*The Brothers Singer* describes very efficiently the different combinations and gradations of realism and fantasy, vivid narration and psychological probing, awareness of patterns of Jewish history and Jewish religious consciousness, which characterize the writings of the Singer family. Through its sympathetic treatment of *The Family Muskrat*, *The Mayor* and *The Estate*, the book also serves to counteract a prevailing tendency to dismiss Bashevis' large-canvas novels while praising his achievements as a writer of short stories. Irving Howe is the most influential critic who has consistently sought to devalue Bashevis' longer and more elaborately plotted writings; but it must be admitted that in his introduction to the new translation of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* Howe succeeds in setting that novel in the context of Yiddish fiction in a way that one misses in Sinclair's otherwise so illuminating study.

For Yiddish writers . . . this kind of novel did not come easily. The

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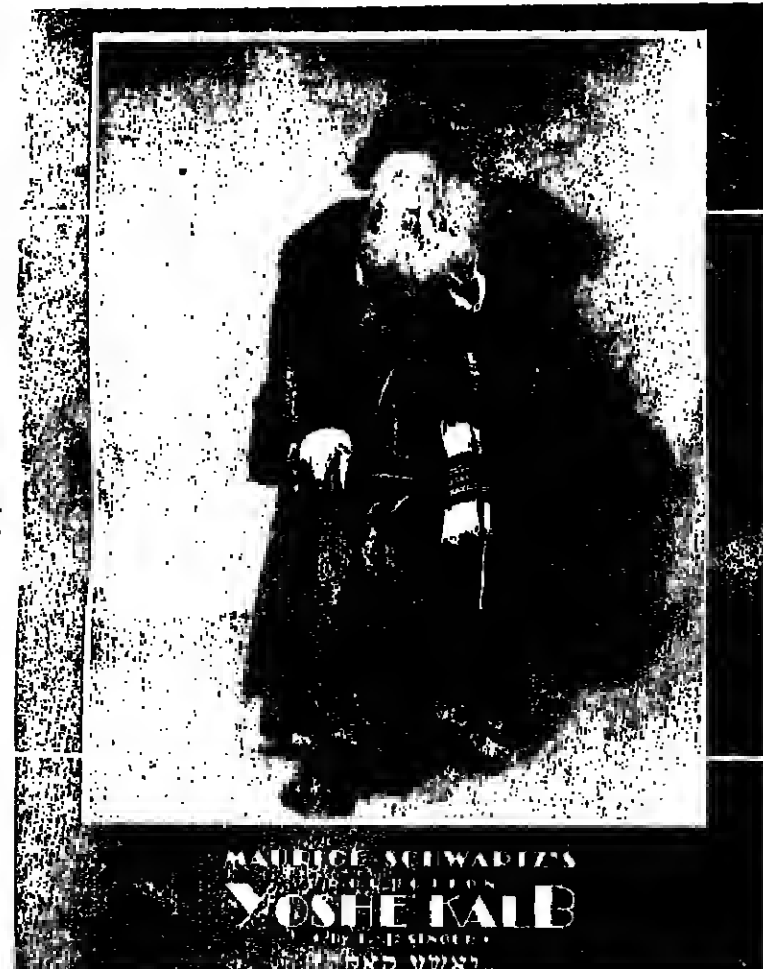


pioneer Yiddish "classics" of the late nineteenth century — Mendele, Sholom Aleichem, Peretz — turned spontaneously to short fictions, as if seeking a modest form to go together with the narrow social range of the *shetl* life that was their usual setting. Only with later Yiddish writers, those coming to prominence during the first few decades of this century, did the large-scale, many-layered "polyphonic" novel begin to flourish. And this, of course, was partly due to the increasing urbanization of the East European Jews, which, in turn, brought about a more complex latticing of classes than had been possible in the *shetl*. It also brought about a new exposure to European culture, with its large variety of literary forms. The family chronicle or social novel in Yiddish... is both sign and cause of the increasing "Europeanization" of Jewish life in Poland and Russia.

Sinclair shows himself well aware of this "European" dimension; but one feels again and again that he lets slip valuable opportunities for giving his authors in a specifically Yiddish tradition. When, for instance, he quotes the revocation of Rabbi Gershom's "ban" in *Satan in Gorye*, he should have told his readers something of the significance of that ban, whose interdiction of polygamy created a Western Jewish culture-area separate from that of the Near East and thus laid the foundations for the rise of Yiddish literature. When he reprinted the rhymed ending of that same novel he should surely have explained to his readers that its strange typographical layout deliberately recalls conventions of Yiddish book-making in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He might also have pointed out that figures like the grotesque Rabbi Melekh of *Yoshe Kalb* are not simple life-studies: they stand in a literary tradition that looks back to nineteenth-century satires like Linetski's *Das poyliche yidit*.

Omissions of this kind, and such eccentricities as the use of the term *shvartshn* (which seems to me neither acceptable Yiddish nor acceptable Hebrew) in both *The Brothers Singer* and the introduction to *Deborah*, will not seriously impair the pleasure and the profit readers are likely to derive from Sinclair's work. One feature of it, however, I do find deeply disturbing: that is the author's readiness to accept translations without checking them against the originals. Let us look at just a few consecutive quotations from *Satan in Gorye* on pp 74-84 of *The Brothers Singer*, and compare them with the standard Yiddish text of Bashevis's novel which was re-issued in 1972 and is therefore relatively easy to obtain.

Where Bashevis tells us: "that the child Rekele would wake her grandmother and shake her with all her might" ("getreylt mit ale koykhes"), the translation accepted by Sinclair reads: "her whole body a-gulver". Where the Yiddish shows Rekele "staring up" from sleep ("alk oyfgeren") drenched "with fear" ("mit angst"), the English version substitutes something much less dramatic: "She awoke, drenched with sweat". Where Bashevis's original novel speaks of "waging war on heretics" ("krigt slich mit di apikorsim"), the translator anticipates the outcome of that war: "vanquish diabolism". Where Bashevis parodies ritual phrases like "doim, voysht, vaim roys oshon" with the hideous matching rhymed "blit un yeytun trutes nemeah", his translator finds the reader off with a monosyllabic doublet: "blood and filth". Where Bashevis understates, imputing to one of his characters the realization that the set-up in which he found himself was anything but pure and clean ("az di gantshe zakhe's nishet keyn royn"), his translator chooses something at once more direct and more high-falutin: "Rabbi Benish realized that there was evil abroad". Where the original tells us that there would be "great changes on earth and in heaven" ("vayn forkumim groylikhe farandernungen"), the translation reprinted in *The Brothers Singer* inexplicably offers: "Earth and heaven would rejoice". Where Bashevis talks of a beard reaching down to a character's navel ("bis tum nopl"), his translator, genteelly, makes it reach down to his "waist"; where the former has the heroine's naked body covered merely by a shawl ("shawl"), the latter covers it with a "gown". We also find some unwarranted and unexplained



MAURICE SCHWARTZ  
YOSHE KALB

omissions: of a scriptural quotation introduced by "vi es sheteyt geshtrah", for example, and of a characteristically double-edged phrase which calls the frozen population of Gorye a "holy community" ("fun der heyliker kehile"). What criteria did Sinclair apply when he decided to accept versions that so obviously deviate from the standard text? His readers surely have a right to know.

When Sinclair quotes from *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, he uses a leisurely, expansive English version by Maurice Samuel — a version which is now supplanted by a new rendering from the pen of Joseph Singer. The differences between these two renderings are striking — they will remind English readers brought up on Constance Garnett's translations from the Russian novelists of the shock they received when they graduated to more modern, more jagged and more nervous versions of the same novelists by David Magarshak and his successors. Here is a brief sample, chosen at random: a single paragraph from Book II of *The Brothers Ashkenazi*.

Day after day the bright sun poured its light down on the broad, grain-laden fields of Poland and Russia. The prisoners' train wound its way slowly from station to station, and prisoners who could fight their way to the windows stared out hungrily at the peasants bending down as they swung their sickles, at the women and children who banded the sheaves and sang at their work.

(Maurice Samuel)

Bright, sunny days filled the world. In fields groaning with grain, young peasant girls bound in red kerchiefs sang as they tied the sheaves.

(Joseph Singer)

If one now looks at the Yiddish text of the same paragraph in the Matones series edition one finds that neither of these renderings corresponds to it exactly. In two important respects the Yiddish text supports Joseph Singer: it has "the world" ("oyf der welt") instead of "Poland and Russia", and it tells us nothing about a train and prisoners fighting their way to the windows. In other respects, it veers more towards Samuel: it has peasants cutting grain; "zenen, poyerim geshtrahen" (youngsters, poyering) as well as girls tying the sheaves. It also contains elements, however, which have no equivalent in either English version: a distinction between two kinds of grain, for instance ("korn un veyts"), and a phrase describing the sunlight playing on the girls' red kerchiefs: "yunge poyertes in royt ikhlekht oyt di kep, shpildik mit zun un likht" (my italics).

One can only regret that neither the new translator, nor Irving Howe in his introduction to the new version, has seen fit to clarify this complicated textual situation.

Sinclair's and Howe's accounts of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* comment

fully in an article that does not figure in Sinclair's bibliography, has also suggested one way of resolving them:

*The Family Carnovsky* is a much more complicated text than such a superficial reading reveals. Much of its complexity lies in I. J. Singer's adaptation of two paradigms, one literary, the family novel, and the other quasi-scientific, the nature of Jewish racial identity as understood by contemporary medicine. Both paradigms are presented through the medium of the fictionalized psychology of the central figures in the work. If Singer's restructuring of both the literary and the scientific paradigm in overlooked, as it has been in the past, the novel is reduced to a work of questionable value. Taken in context, the work proves to be one of the major Yiddish attempts to deal with the myth of race and its application to the stereotype of the Jew.

One may disagree with Gilman's analysis, published in *Modern Judaism* in 1981; but no one interested in the art of Joshua Singer can afford to ignore it. When it comes to *Deborah*, however, the novel by that Hinde Esther Singer who became Esther Kreitman, we find ourselves doubly in Sinclair's debt. First, because he virtually rediscovered this novel (whose Yiddish original was published in Warsaw in 1936) and then induced Virago Books to reprint the translation Maurice Carr made some ten years later; and second, because his introduction to the new reprint sets the work in such admirable critical perspective. He is right to point out



Maurice Schwartz (top) as the nysheve rabbi from the Yiddish Art Theatre's production of *Yoshe Kalb* (based on a novel by I. J. Singer). (Below left) Isaac Joshua Singer and his wife Genia; (below right) Isaac Bashevis Singer.

that there are stretches of Esther Kreitman's novel which are derivative, only half realized, "literary" in a pejorative sense; but when (as happens most of the time) autobiographical inspiration is fully at work, when the fictional disguise wears thin, this chronicle of the frustrations suffered by a sensitive, intelligent, highly strung girl within the constraints of traditional Polish-Jewish culture makes fascinating reading. Deborah's problem, exacerbated because she feels insufficiently loved, is best stated in the novel's own words:

Ever since childhood she had longed to receive an education, to cease being the nonentity of the family. She would learn things, gain understanding, and they not only would papa be a great Talmudist, not only would her mother possess a boundless store of knowledge; not only would Michael be a brilliant student, but she, Deborah — the girl who, as her father had once said, was to be a mere nobody when she grew up — would be a person of real consequence. She would make her own life. But these thoughts were all very fine at bedtime. When she got up the next morning, she was drawn irresistibly into the usual drab routine, and each day was like a repeated repetition of the one that had gone before it. Again she assumed the burden of responsibility that weighed so heavily on her childish shoulders. She was lacking in courage and too sentimental to leave her ailing mother to get on with it; and so — without being told, without being thanked — she went back into harness again, fretting and suffering all the more for her vain hopes of freedom — freedom that seemed within her grasp.

The story of her struggles is told with a marvellous eye for grotesques, and with an admirable facility for reproducing the texture of experience, the physical and the mental together, one need only read Esther's account of

the first impact of a big city, Warsaw, on a girl brought up in the provinces, convince oneself that she is a writer of the Yiddish original; but Maurice Carr's translation reads well, if one discounts some outmoded slang and many irritating inconsistencies of transliteration. It does seem to me, however, that the title Esther Kreitman gave to the Yiddish version of her work — *Der sheydin tante* — is preferable to the bland *Deborah*. A literal translation of *Der sheydin tante* suggests "Pandemonium"; but that, surely, is not literal enough, for the title refers to an actual dance performed at the climax of the novel: Deborah's wedding, which was to lead to liberation but leads in fact to worse imprisonment. "Dance of Demons" or, perhaps, "Dance of Macabre", might well be considered an acceptable title when the translation is revised and the novel re-issued.

Though it affords us proteptic glimpses of Bashevis's more recent work, *The Brothers Singer* does not, in detail, anything which belatedly springs first exploited by the Romans that now supply an extensive and architecturally diverse complex of baths, the focal point of the town where everybody comes to talk and swim. The Baths are a steamy place, finely described, obscurely traversed by sexuality: a former haunt of antique and ambiguous gods who even now are not entirely dispossessed.

A structure of churches, of pubs (including The Ruining Dog and The Ratman), of good and bad districts. A quantity of characters and Characters: a madame; an ex-prostitute; a philanthropist; an unorthodox (indeed heretical) Jewish high Anglican priest, Father Bernard Jacoby, homosexual, chaste, bearded, old boy, Adam McCaffrey, who sees what we do not see. A wide-eyed, blackish sheep with an illuminated pumpkin grin, George McCaffrey, Adam's uncle, victim of figures of consciousness and fits of violence that seize him like imperatives of Duty. Half-a-dozen more McCaffreys. And a famous son of *Emilene* returning to the house where he was born in the poor part of town — John Robert Rozanov, author of *Logic and Consciousness*, *Nostalgia for the Particular*, and *Being and Beyond*, grandson of a Russian émigré and a local Methodist girl.

George McCaffrey is the pupil of the title, a curiously marginal central figure; Rozanov is the philosopher, the "Prelude" is over, the "Events" begin slow accumulation of gloomy, fascinating, intricate 550 pages of morally charged action and reaction, much of it dead-tempered or unkind, most of it foolish, ill-considered, and pragmatically motivated by fixed delusions, narrow sympathies that continue to narrow with age, and befuddled understanding. Sometimes people do the right thing, but it's usually a matter of chance. *Phronesis* and *Sophrosune* are in very short supply, as are the other virtues. The book seems like an extended illustration of a central thesis of Iris Murdoch's essay "The Sovereignty of Good":

one of [the psyche's] main pastimes is daydreaming. It is reluctant to face unpleasant realities. Its consciousness is not normally a transparent glass through which it views the world, but a cloud of more or less fantastic reverie designed to protect the psyche from pain. It constantly seeks consolation, either through imagined inflation of self or through fictions of a theological nature. Even its loving is more often than not an assertion of self. I think we can probably recognize ourselves in this rather depressing description.

We can recognize ourselves in this description. But can we really recognize ourselves in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, in this pessimistic, baroque, or, as the title suggests, emotional?

Excess is not a problem to itself, any more than exuberance is. Exaggeration and even caricature are means to truth. Realism is not the only route to reality, to accurate representation. Iris Murdoch's novels represent the essentially excessive and "anti-realist" structure, if not the manner, of *farce* — everybody to love with everybody else, coincidence the

## Compounding error with excess

Galen Strawson

IAN MURDOCH  
*The Philosopher's Pupil*  
576pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press. £7.95.  
0 7011 2682 5

"N", the anonymous narrator, sets the scene in a "Prelude". He's a psychiatrist — perhaps a psychoanalyst. He sketches the symbolic geography and introduces his "dramatis personae" with clumsy exactitude: a small town, "N's town", or Ennistone, a closed system of gossip; non-conformist dynasties thriving and declining; a notorious family, the McCaffreys, originally Quakers.

A couple of numinous sites: the Ennistone Ring of megaliths, "monstrous with unorthodox thought, and dense with mysterious, unattainable impacted being"; and the belatedly springs first exploited by the Romans that now supply an extensive and architecturally diverse complex of baths, the focal point of the town where everybody comes to talk and swim. The Baths are a steamy place, finely described, obscurely traversed by sexuality: a former haunt of antique and ambiguous gods who even now are not entirely dispossessed.

A structure of churches, of pubs (including The Ruining Dog and The Ratman), of good and bad districts. A quantity of characters and Characters: a madame; an ex-prostitute; a philanthropist; an unorthodox (indeed heretical) Jewish high Anglican priest, Father Bernard Jacoby, homosexual, chaste, bearded, old boy, Adam McCaffrey, who sees what we do not see. A wide-eyed, blackish sheep with an illuminated pumpkin grin, George McCaffrey, Adam's uncle, victim of figures of consciousness and fits of violence that seize him like imperatives of Duty. Half-a-dozen more McCaffreys. And a famous son of *Emilene* returning to the house where he was born in the poor part of town — John Robert Rozanov, author of *Logic and Consciousness*, *Nostalgia for the Particular*, and *Being and Beyond*, grandson of a Russian émigré and a local Methodist girl.

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*meunier du jeu* — and some of them succeed marvellously. The brilliant characterization in *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) is enhanced by the monkey-puzzle of romantic entanglements and inevitable hopeless loves. (One's touchy sense of the unacceptably incredible is stilled by the sheer momentum of the narrative.) Iris Murdoch's novels are proof of how realistic insight and a genius for realistic detail can thrive in the larger-than-life.

*The Philosopher's Pupil*, however, lacks the narrative momentum that could absorb and transmute its exaggerations. These are in part linguistic: words are used in such a way as to be weakened by their own strength: "a black vomit of sudden positive hatred... was going to spill out of his mouth onto the carpet"; "they had both lain, gripped together, absolutely motionless in a spellbound ecstatic trance, perfectly relaxed yet also in extreme tension, in a holdingness of immense urgent power"; "her heart was all scratched and scared and vibrating all over with a mixture of joy and pain and fear". The many triplets of uncommenced adjectives ("blissful deep happy", "intense insolent private", "provocative infant mocking"), the lists of compounded feelings ("remorse, regret, resentment, loss, anger and terrible longing", "misery, remorse, terror, agony of longing"), the ubiquitous intensifiers ("absolutely", "utterly", "perfectly", "awfully") these often risk sounding merely gushing.

This is partly unjust. Feelings do

combine into complex simultaneities of remorse, resentment, anger, and so on; the adjectival triplets often make up powerful and accurate compounds; they are uncommenced partly to represent the headlong nature of unchecked thought; and some of them are attributed to Gabriel McCaffrey, Adam's mother, whose breathless, lachrymose musings they exactly suit. But they do not work — and this is part of a general fault in the narrator. He thinks that if one rapidly accumulates words in the description of a thing, this can only increase the force of what one says. But this is simply not so. Descriptions can be weakened by too rapid an enrichment, collapsing into a blur or an offence against good taste.

The same sorts of excess occur when the characters speak directly and implausibly of the intensity of their emotions. Rozanov, the satirist, cold philosopher, falls in love with his eighteen-year-old granddaughter. He wrongly tells his love; elicits her; then argues with her that they must never see each other again, proclaiming his misery the while: "oh the pain... oh wicked, wicked, the pain of it... I'm pinned down and screaming... I'm in pain, I'm in the presence of death... I cannot tell you the hell I am in". Strong words; but the response is neither pity nor contempt, nor even astonishment; it is simply disbelief. When George speaks in a similar manner — "Oh, if you only knew how unhappy I am, how my heart hurts in my breast, it's all so black. Oh what a burden it is" — one does not disbelieve; Poor-Tom George is

capable of anything. But one is not convinced, only dismayed — the dismay of embarrassment, not of compassion.

The religious — in the largest sense of the word — themes of the book are all-pervading. According to the local folklore the town goes through periodic phases of "moral unrest". Lud's Rill, the "Little Tesser", is a favourite portent: a small, natural jet of hot water that springs up in the gardens of the Baths, it occasionally sends spurts of scalding water thirty feet into the air. This it does at the beginning of the book, when George tries to drown his wife Stella, then saves her himself. N comments: the "accident" was "taken by the serious-minded as an example of how pure disorder at one level can cause a fall of moral barriers at another". Strange days. Although it is more modern, more urban, less magical, although it is visited by a graceless, egotistical philosopher, not a radiant, wine-bearing angel and his master, Ennistone invites comparison with Maidenbridge, the little town in T. F. Powys's *Mr Weston's Good Wife*. It is Maidenbridge touched with the darker tones of J. C. Powys's *Glastonbury* and brought effectively and uncomfortably into the 1980s, a living parallelism of the fundamental forces of sex, love, death and religion.

There is a continual and highly dramatic emphasis on the symbiotic heave of good and evil in the lives of essentially imperfect individuals. There is a fight of light against dark — of essentially compromised light against simply by cutting, not changing, what is already there.

No one sees clearly in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, no one is wise, not even the narrator: least of all the philosopher. It is a depressing work, in which a remarkable and profound psychological intelligence devotes itself to setting down in the upper-case italics of semi-gothic fiction some unattractive truths about the way we tend to treat each other. In the end, we do recognize ourselves in this description. Morality penetrates all aspects of everyday life, as Father Jacoby observes, and we do not perform very well. As the story slowly advances on its many fronts, those who are not thrown by the linguistic and emotional excesses will find themselves caught up, carried along. But this is not one of Iris Murdoch's unputdownable novels. And it is not nearly as good a novel as the novel it contains — the one that can be obtained simply by cutting, not changing, what is already there.

spirited. *Fools of Fortune*, however, is unequivocally bleak. In spite of its outbreaks of boldness and hopefulness, and the changes of style which enliven it, it is also exceptionally economical (counting right up to the present with no sense of the narrative material being spread thinly), and impressive. The central relationship in the book, a love affair between Willie and his cousin Marianne (yet another Woodcombe, to keep the family pattern intact), is cut off before it gets under way. We're reminded that the survivors of the massacre at Kilineagh are radically incapacitated as far as ordinary living is concerned. In fact, we've encountered a similar postulate before in William Trevor's fiction, which isn't lacking in characters who, as children, are exposed to some piece of nastiness and as a consequence grow into abnormal adults. But these instances of maladjustment can only seem trivial and ludicrous in comparison with the effects of the atrocity which dominates the new novel. Though it eschews the grand manner which its subject might have suggested to a less accomplished author, *Fools of Fortune* is nevertheless composed on a grand scale.

Entries are invited for the 1983 John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize and David Higham Prize. The John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize is awarded for a literary work published in the current year by a writer under the age of thirty from Great Britain or the Commonwealth. Previous winners of the Prize include Melvyn Bragg, Margaret Drabble, V. S. and Shiva Naipaul and William Boyd. The David Higham Prize is awarded to the best first novel or book of short stories published during the current year by a citizen of the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa or Pakistan. Both awards are administered by the National Book League; entry forms and rules are available from: Barbara Buckley, National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QT. Entries for both awards must be received no later than July 1, 1983. The National Book League also announces publication of *Books about Books* (£1.50, 210 to NBL members); the third revised, and expanded edition of the booklist originally published in 1977 as *101 Books on the Book Trade*, now updated to cover books published in the last twenty five years.

## Atrocity on a grand scale

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM TREVOR  
*Fools of Fortune*  
239pp. Bodley Head. £7.50.  
0 370 30853 7

Two ancestral houses are evoked at the beginning of William Trevor's new novel — one English, well-kept and flourishing, the other Irish and all-but derelict. There are links between them. In the middle of the last century, an Anna Woodcombe, of Woodcombe Park in Dorset, left home to marry William Quinlan, of the house called Kilineagh in Co. Cork, subsequently taking it on herself to minister to the destitute, when famine struck this part of the country, and dying for her pains. Like John Hewitt's great-grandmother, commemorated in his fine poem "The Scar", "she, who of her nature quickly answered/Accepted in return the famine-fever", and by her action, secured her descendants for the Irish cause. Two generations later, another William Quinlan, married another Woodcombe (a minor branch of the family this time, though) loses his life in a night raid of the kind for which Ireland was then notorious: His son, the third William Quinlan in the novel, is Trevor's principal narrator.

Willie, who is eight in 1918, enjoys at this period a way of life in which nothing is more vexatious than the prospect of boarding-school — a prospect some way in the future at that. In the meantime, at Kilineagh, a great variety of riches are there for the taking: sisters to play with, parents to reverse, servants to admire, acquaintance to marvel at, the doings of local heroes to dwell on. Life goes on in an atmosphere of exuberance and good will. The household includes two amiable aunts, collectors of stray dogs, and an untroubled priest, Willie in the keep by instructing Willie in the rudiments of Latin and the vagaries of history, Irish history in particular, with its poetic revivals of fortune and tragedy on account of his pacifist convictions, is Daniel O'Connell. In this, and in much else, the ex-priest is untypical. It's easier to take the view that violence is the proper antidote to disaffection.

Injustice is felt everywhere, and the elder Quinlans — the English mother and mill-owning father — are ranged on

the side of the revolutionaries who would charge all that. Michael Collins visits Kilineagh in his motor-cycling clothes and is invited to lunch, though not given permission to use the demesne as a training ground for soldiers, since Willie's father has no wish to endanger his dependants. By the summer of 1920, a Black-and-Tan force is stationed at the nearby town of Fermoy, and the pattern of atrocity, reprisal and counter-reprisal is well established. Thomas Mac Curtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork, is murdered in his home after a group of men with blackened faces has forced its way in. Guerrilla fighters, living for the most part in dug-outs in the hills, make it their business to organize the execution of British spies, leaving explanatory placards attached to the corpses. William Trevor has appropriated one such killing for his novel: the body of an informer named Doyle, from which the tongue has been cut out, is found hanging from a tree on the Kilineagh estate. This, more than anything else, constitutes a source of interest and excitement for the younger Quinlans.

Though he doesn't by any means discount the endemic unrest and its reverberations in the countryside, William Trevor's concern, in the first three chapters of his novel, is to show how innocent and idyllic things were before the war — for those not oppressed by political concerns at least. We have been a world constructed with such subtlety and grace, and we remember it for what it was, when it is abruptly demolished. An act of reprisal, instigated by a Black-and-Tan sergeant named Rudkin, is carried out. Like the house called Danielstown in Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Last September* ("The door stood open hospitably excepted — it was about to be blown up by a furnace"), Kilineagh — which has been the centre of Cork to charred debris. There is a degree of historical irony at work here: "big houses" of the Kilineagh type, the property of the Anglo-Irish, were a common target for Sinn Féiners possessed by fury against such places and what they stood for, the victims of Black-and-Tan aggression were generally humbler.

Still, as Yaats observed, it is all part of the same imbroglio: "somebody's man is killed, or a house burned/Vel no clear fact to be discerned". What is clear to Trevor, and what he makes

April 1980



# The misanthrope of Croisset

Harry Levin

FRANCIS STEEGMULLER (Editor and Translator)

The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: Volume 2, 1857-1880  
309pp. Harvard University Press.  
£12.  
0 674 52640 6

"I expressed myself badly when I told you 'one must not write with one's heart'", wrote Gustave Flaubert to George Sand, who had predictably balked at so negativistic a credo. "What I meant was: don't put your own personality on stage. I believe that great art is scientific and impersonal. Nine years later he would still be qualifying his own renunciations. He would protest that he belonged to no school, least of all "the realists". Far from lacking convictions, he had too many. But these demanded "that the artist... appear in his work no more than God in nature". Or rather, to put the gesture of self-effacement somewhat more modestly: "The man is nothing, the work everything". Formalist criticism could build its church upon such a substratum, whence it could excommunicate all believers in the geographical term. Those, however, must have included another self of Flaubert. Still arguing with George Sand, who had suggested that critics might justifiably wither away, he had momentarily envisaged another possibility:

When will they be artists, nothing but artists, real artists? Where have you seen a piece of criticism that is concerned, intensely concerned, with the work in itself? The milieu in which it was produced and the circumstances that occasioned it are very closely analysed. But the unconscious poetries which brought it into being? Its composition? Its style? The author's point of view?

This was to look beyond Sainte-Beuve and Taine, whom he classified as historians, and to entertain a prospect of formalism, for which his cult of style had prepared the ground. But "la poésie inscrite"? "le point de vue de l'auteur"? — such considerations would leave no room for the intentional fallacy or the demise of the author. They might instead have been cited as a warrant for the monstrous pseudo-biographical inquest by Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Idiot de la famille*. Not that Sartre had the slightest use for the Flaubertian conception of the writer as artist. Yet would any other critic have expended some 2,800 outside pages on the first half of any other writer's career? Sartre chose his subject, he tells us not quite candidly, because "it answered the question: 'Qu'est-ce qu'un homme, aujourd'hui?' If he had succeeded in annihilating his victim, he would have demonstrated that "l'homme n'est rien" with a vengeance. Flaubert's favourite motto from Epictetus, "Conceal your life", spoke for his reclusiveness, his deep sense of privacy. Proust took a similar attitude in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, possibly apprehending his own biographers, even though his great novel would be a sublimated autobiography.

Both Flaubert and Proust believed, that the work transcended the life. Flaubert would have waxed characteristically indignant at the suggestion that, in this case, something could be said for the opposite belief. To prefer his letters to his novels became a snobbish *idee reçue*, which Proust echoed though he did not agree. For others, notably Gide, the correspondence became a bible, literary and otherwise. Its special charge derives from a paradoxical combination: on the one hand unique devotion to artistic discipline, on the other spontaneous release from self-imposed constraints. Though it has long since taken a place of its own in French literature, it has waited for Francis Steegmuller to translate it into English with the distinction it deserves. With this second volume he concludes a presentation which is necessarily a drastic selection. There will be about 5,000 letters in the authoritative Pléiade edition of Jean Bruneau, only half of which has

appeared so far. Mr Steegmuller has had the advantage of Professor Bruneau's cooperation on material covered by the two forthcoming Pléiade volumes. Moreover, his own credentials as editor, biographer, and translator — particularly in the Flaubertian sphere, are so well established that he can be confidently trusted with this delicate and demanding task.

The result is not an episodic sequence but a systematic interpretation, from the introductory "Reflections" to the circumstantial appendices, with a few well-chosen illustrations to body forth the verbal portraiture. Letters have been meaningfully selected, cut for repetitions or trivialities, strung together with running commentary, and annotated with identifications and cross-references. Interesting correspondents — Sainte-Beuve, Baudelaire, Zola, the Goncourts — above all George Sand (regrettably not Turgenev) — have been enabled to speak for themselves on occasion. The translation is consistently readable and reliable, aptly replicating the ups and downs of Flaubert's unbuttoned prose. Some of his habitual obscenities, rendered here into English for the first time, and often bowdlerized in the earlier French texts, may incite a twinge of culture-shock. We need not be puntians, nor lay claim to purer thoughts; it is simply that our language fosters different, and more limited, horizons of expectation. Thus creation, regularly invoked as a private metaphor for inspiration, consequently becomes a standard theme, varied and elaborated by flights of scabrous fancy. Associating "the pangs of art" with the joys of sex, Flaubert could moan and groan over both simultaneously. Seldom can an artist have experienced less ecstasy in "getting up" his projects.

The preceding volume must have been considerably easier to organize, since its internal drama — realistic background, romantic impetus, psychosomatic crisis, artistic vocation, oriental journey, affair with "the Muse", Louise Colet — builds up to a climax with *Madame Bovary*. Nobody would dispute the opinion of Henry James, that this first published novel was clearly the novelist's best, except perhaps the novelist himself, who understandably came to regard its unmitigated acceptance as a discouragement to his further endeavours. These lay down, at all events, the pattern for the present volume, which resourcefully faces its anticlimactic preconditions. Historically, it leads from the Second Empire, personified in Flaubert's blind courtship of the Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, into the Third Republic, through the "Année Terrible" of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. Domestically, it registers the decline and death of his mother, in whose country home he somehow managed to live out his days, plus his relations with his orphaned niece Caroline, which proved to be no less entangling than those of a father with his daughter. But the feminine presence that emerges most strongly is that of George Sand. The belated dialogue with her forms a thoughtful counterpart to the giddy romance with Louise Colet.

The succession of Flaubert's works is almost a paradigm, in its cyclical alternation between romanticism and realism. After the quotidian modernity of *Madame Bovary*, he reverted to the exotic past with *Salomée*. He was still employing modern methods, he felt since his reconstruction of ancient Carthage — unlike the prose epics of Chateaubriand — was heavily based upon historical reading and archaeological research. This invited an adversely pedantic review by a professional archaeologist, whom Flaubert put down with heavy irony. But he himself played the pedant, in responding to Sainte-Beuve's strictures, by quibbling over sources and anachronisms. The debate between friends was conducted more in sorrow than anger, and the critic printed the novelist's remonstrance with his three detailed articles. Steegmuller conscientiously annotates the documentary references, yet he scarcely notes the real gravamen of Sainte-Beuve's charges: that the book is synthetic and operatic, it smells of

the lamp, it disregards the reader. Speaking more broadly, he doubted whether the genre of historical fiction could present a convincing depiction of remote antiquity. A cogent counter-argument would also be a defence of *Marius* the Epitaph, *Joseph und seine Brüder*, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, and *I Claudius*, — not to mention *Quo Vadis*!

Flaubert marked his next return to the contemporary scene with his "Parisian novel", *L'Éducation sentimentale*. A letter complaining to the Goncourts about the vexations of Paris reminds us that he was never a city man. But his story of Frédéric Moreau comes as close as he ever did to a *roman vécu*, a "moral history" of his generation. It is indeed a study in collective disillusionment, linking personal losses with ideological failures of nerve. One's cantonment, alas, do not like to be out of joint; again he was dismayed by a hostile reception. He comforted himself by remarking, one year afterward, that the current excesses of 1870 might have been avoided, if readers had only been willing to learn from him the object-lessons of 1848. Cyclically he turned back to a third and definitive redaction of *Le Tentation de Saint Antoine*, his obsessive alchemical fantasy of austere dedication and worldly distraction. Then, after having acknowledged its "failure", he achieved a moderate success shortly before his death with *Trois Contes*. These repeated and quickened the temporal cycle on a dismally smaller scale, through two legends about saints — one medieval (*Saint Julien*), one modern (*Un Coeur simple*) — plus a last ancient sinner (*Hérodias*).

The first volume of his testamentary work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, was nearly completed when he died. The second, constituting an "Encyclopédie of Human Stupidity", could have been prolonged indefinitely. Both George Sand and Turgenev bartered

misgivings about it; Flaubert had intermittently taken it up and set it aside over a seventeen-year period; more and more he felt himself identified, much too closely for comfort, with his subject-matter. The writer who collected clichés and bromides, who documented his writing by reading 1,500 books, who retired from the world to record his compilations, parodied himself in his comedy team of troglodytic copying-clerks. His final decade had lived up to his most pessimistic forebodings. War had filled his house with German soldiers; revolution had brought the Banapartist régime to an apocalyptic dénouement. Prematurely aged, helplessly lamenting the deaths of his mother, his "literary conscience", Louis Bouilhet, and other lifelong friends, he was not spared money troubles. The culminating irony was his niece's marriage, thoroughly bourgeois and ultimately disastrous. He had joined his family in persuading her to forget a young painter and spouse a local businessman, who would involve them all in a train of financial embarrassments and psychological stresses.

The most congenial note in this gloomy record was the new and solidifying friendship with George Sand. The full text of their letters makes an important book by itself; Steegmuller cites and recommends the recent edition of Alphonse Jacobs. It would be hard to think of two more disparate temperaments coming to understand one another in mutual affection and moral support. Wholly apart from the contrast between them as writers — prolific publicist and fussy mandarin — they professed opposing principles. Her commitments were his aversions: progress, humanitarianism, democracy. In misanthropic reaction he cursed universal suffrage, damned the proletariat as potential bourgeoisie, and looked upon the socialists as "those Jesuits of the

future". Civilization had taken the wrong turning, in 1789, when it promulgated "that modern religion", civic. "What kind of a world are we going to inhabit?" he asked himself, while the Prussians were billeted on his mother's estate at Croisset, and responded with his mordant outline of history: "Paganism, Christianity, Buddhism [Mysicism]: such are the great evolutions of mankind. It's sad to find oneself at the beginning of the third." None of his complaints had prevented him from duly volunteering and grimly drilling with the National Guard, a patriotic Frenchman *malgré lui*.

As opposed to his stern appeals for Justice, George Sand pleaded — Partislike — on behalf of Mercy. That was his formulation of the issue; hers was to view it as a dialectical encounter between Desolation and Consolation. It must be admitted that things seemed to be going his way: ie, going to pieces. She was moved to reaffirm her compassion for the people by publishing a "Reply to a Friend" in *Le Temps*. This anonymous friend had never been young, she argued; she herself had never stopped being young. "If to persist in loving is a sign of youth", Older than he nonetheless by half a generation, she cast a materal spell which he found more intriguing than the allure of his mistresses. At one point she figuratively kisses him good-night, addressing him as "my great precious child". Referring to themselves as "old troubadours", they wryly commiserate, talking through the night and reading their manuscripts aloud on infrequent visits. She did not live to read the results of her influence in *Un Coeur simple*, his sympathetic tale of female servitude and stolid endurance. But his glimmer, at unwonted intervals, continues to shine through his dark panoplies of self-deceptions, petty vanities, tawdry motives, frustrating seductions, passive capitulations, and missed opportunities.

## The Prince and the Philistines

J. M. Cocking

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

Correspondance: Tome VIII, 1896  
Edited by Henri Mondor and Lloyd James Austin  
377pp. Paris: Gallimard, 190fr.  
2 07 027879 4

Verlaine died in January 1896, and before the end of the month an ad hoc gathering of poets convened by Léon Deschamps elected Mallarmé as "Prince des poètes" in his stead. Mallarmé was more embarrassed than pleased. He thanked Deschamps, but refused point-blank to have a banquet in his honour; to others he wrote that the only worth-while reputation, in his view, arose among friends with the same reverence for poetry as he felt himself. This indifference to publicity and contempt for the opinion of the Philistines were part of the aesthetic creed which, on the whole, governed his life; yet he could not help wanting to know what was being said about him, and was a regular subscriber to a press-cutting agency called "Argus".

In 1896 he showed himself more than irritated by the scepticism and incomprehension of his critics. In June *Le Gaulois* carried an article by Henri Lapauze reporting "an evening with Léon Tolstoy" and quoting the Russian novelist's strictures on Mallarmé's obscurity. Mallarmé, invited to comment, replied that this reaction was natural enough in a writer who had learned French by reading "les classiques que nous ne connaissons pas", mais voyez-vous que nous nous occupons à renforcer ce langage absolu, au lieu de faire à nos risques et périls des expériences individuelles, en tentant, s'il est possible, de les authentifier?"

The Tolstoy interview revived the controversy about obscurity. The *Revue Blanche* which, in 1895, had published ten of Mallarmé's articles submitted by Proust six months before and, as Proust wrote indignantly to his mother, printed in July this essay "Contre l'obscurité"

without a word to the author. Proust did not name Mallarmé, whom he several times mentioned elsewhere with respect, and the kind of obscurity he described had little or no bearing on Mallarmé's work. Proust wrote against "la jaune école" however, and Mallarmé would have read this essay as yet another symptom of the growing anti-Symbolist reaction. So he settled down to write the eleventh and last of his "Variations sur un sujet". "Je secoue en poux mes agresseurs qui deviendront légion", he wrote in August.

"Le Mystère dans les lettres" appeared in the *Revue Blanche* in September; and to another correspondent he wrote: "J'ai voulu une bonne fois et sans en avoir l'air, répondre à la sottise qui me harcèle". This essay has some of his most often quoted aphorisms: the "mitolement, en desces, perçable de la surface concédée à la réalité" which is his new phrase for the mysterious suggestiveness for essential to poetry, takes one's mind back to the "mirage interne des mots mêmes" evoked in one of his earliest letters of the Tournon period. But if Mallarmé's conviction about the true aim of poetry has not wavered, he cannot now recapture the dangerous excitement of those early days; a disturbance that had led him both into poetry of tremendous oniric power and into near madness. In 1896 his volume of poetry planned with the Belgian publisher Deman in 1891 is still in nearer production. Mallarmé keeps promising to add new sections to "Hérodias", but fails to deliver; and, as Lloyd Austin suggests, his repeated rejections of Deman's proposals of type-faces and layout seem to be as much a matter of stalling as of fastidious regard for presentation — though Mallarmé was always exacting on that score.

The charming and witty occasional verse he wrote to please his friends came easily to him, and there are a good many examples here. A lot of his time was spent on the chores he accepted as part of his literary involvement. Professor Austin points out that a quarter of his letters in this volume are acknowledgments of

complimentary copies received; and they are always courteous. In spite of his complaints to his daughter at having to write them, other letters have to do with his chairmanship of the fund-raising committee for the erection of a bust of Verlaine in the Luxembourg gardens, a project frustrated until long after Mallarmé's death; first by literary jealousies and conspiracies, then by the posthumous publication of *Varlaine's Invention*, which shocked the literary public. Another task, important but unproductive and time-consuming, was the correction of proofs for his collected prose works; even this seems to have moved slowly, although he pressed his friends into service. The volume of *Diversions* was to appear in January 1897.

The freedom of retirement seems to have tempted Mallarmé into a greater indulgence in "le rêve, ennemi de sa charge", as he had put it in "Le Tombeau de Gautier". The summer stay at Valvins, now stretched from May to November. Some of the more endearing letters, for a reader sensitive to Mallarmé's charm "au sens profond et magique du mot", as Fernand Gregh described it, are those he wrote to his wife and daughter before and after their shorter stay with him in the country; dealing, in the spring, with his experiences with the mason and the painter in improving what is intended now to be not just a temporary summer retreat but a second home; and, in autumn, recording the aesthetic bliss he never failed to find to day. Only when the last leaf had dropped was he prepared to rejoice in his family and his life. The orchestral coquetry of starting their season in Paris. In his meditations on the nature of poetry as he understood it, impressions of the forest and of music had often come together in his mind.

Professor Austin's standard of editing does not waver. His introduction is an admirable summary of the year's events, and the notes, as always, provide the reader with all the needs in the way of background information to reconstruct the details of Mallarmé's life.



The "eccentric dancer" Bessie McCoy (Davis) (c1885-1931) from Stars at the American Musical Theater in Historic Photographs (177pp, Dover, Constable, £7.50, 0 486 24209 9).

## The great humbugger

Cyril B. Mills

A. H. SAXON (Editor)

Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum  
351pp. New York: Columbia  
University Press, 1979.  
£21.95.  
0 231 05412 2

P. T. Barnum, the Yankee nation's self-proclaimed "Prince of Humbug", can hardly be said to be a wholly American. For nearly half a century he was also a well-known figure on these shores, manoeuvring to have himself and his famous midget Tom Thumb received at Buckingham Palace (which he visited several times); later outraging Queen Victoria, Parliament and the general public by his unexpected purchase of Jumbo, the children's favourite, from the Royal Zoological Society; and eventually

caping his long career by bringing his entire Circus to Olympe, where during the 1889-90 winter the old showman, now forgiven his earlier transgressions, was received warmly by his British patrons, who thronged the hall as much to catch a glimpse of him as to see his "Greatest Show on Earth". Meanwhile he had travelled the length and breadth of the land, lecturing on such topics as temperance and "The Art of Money-Getting" (this shortly after he had become a bankrupt in the United States) misread an English girl some forty years his junior; managed a variety of theatrical, museum and travelling attractions; and in 1855, at the age of forty-four, published the first edition of his famous autobiography, in which he described candidly his methods of humbugging the public. Not surprisingly his contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic were scandalized.

During the last twenty-five years of his life Barnum continually revised and augmented his autobiography, even directing his wife to write the "Last Chapter" describing his death and funeral. He was honest enough regarding his public career, although of necessity highly selective, but generally reticent about his private life. There have been several biographies of him in the twentieth century, but these are all based on the autobiography, and in date no author has succeeded in penetrating to the private man.

Here is a promising start in that direction: a selection of letters acerbically spanning the showman's entire life, in which we discover, among other things, the amazing range and depth of his activities. In addition to elucidating his involvement with his American Museum in New York City, his Circus, and such well-known figures as Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind — and a love of self-promotion that showed no sign of flagging until his death, at the age of eighty in 1869 — the letters often touch on lesser known aspects of his life. These include Barnum's abiding interest in religion (he was a Universalist, which in his day was considered almost tantamount to atheism), his liking for outrageous parties, his affection for and generosity towards friends and relatives, and a jealous concern for his reputation, which he fully expected to endure forever. Curiously for all his love of

"notoriety" and his constant manipulation of the Press, he was sometimes defensive about his profession of "showman" and wished to be remembered not merely as a purveyor of amusements, but as one who strove seriously to educate and improve his public. No doubt this explains, at least in part, his building and endowing a handsome museum of natural history at Tufts College in Massachusetts; his contributions to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City; and his establishment in Bridgeport, Connecticut, of the Barnum Institute of Science and History, which continues today as a museum devoted to the history of the Circus and to Barnum himself.

Here one also learns to what extent civic concerns absorbed his attention. From his early twenties onwards he was active in politics, serving as Mayor of Bridgeport in 1875, representing his district four times in the Connecticut legislature, and even making a run for Congress. At other times he was publisher and editor of weekly newspapers; bank, water company, and hospital president; real-estate developer; and in general the leading citizen of his beloved Bridgeport, where he lived during the last forty-five years of his life. In his own day he was perhaps the most celebrated person in America, equally at home, as he wrote in one of his letters, with both "crown and cabin". To the end of his days he kept up a steady correspondence with Presidents and statesmen, generals, scientists and eminent divines; persons offering him "eulogies", trying to tempt him into investing in various schemes, or simply wanting his autograph; and of course business associates, friends and relations. In connection with these last some of the more charming letters in this volume are those Barnum wrote to his great-grandchildren.

For these and other revelations and delights the reader is indebted to A. H. Saxon who, with the authorization of Barnum's descendants and residual heirs, for the first time has collected and painstakingly edited over 300 letters. Eschewing the usual practice of burying the reader beneath a mountain of footnotes he has provided a series of succinct explanations or commentaries, wherever necessary, either before or after the respective letters, as well as a masterful introduction to the book and a useful chronology of Barnum's life. Some two dozen illustrations, many never published before, enhance this useful and splendidly designed book, in which the mixture of several typographic styles seems to be based deliberately on the appearance of Barnum's bills. The work concludes with an index of persons, a table of the letters' locations, and a note on sources. In this last, the editor, who is at present working on a biography of Barnum, mentions the possibility of a second volume of letters, 1 for one, would welcome the opportunity to learn even more about America's most celebrated showman, whose frequently outrageous character and conduct are, no less peculiar to the New World, of course, than conservatism is to the Old.

## Straining after sincerity

John Hopkins

KAREN HALTTUNEN

Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870  
262pp. Yale University Press, £16.50.  
0 300 02835 0

This book with a racy title is a study of middle-class culture in America, 1830-70. An uninspiring subject, one might imagine, which could have been handled in an essay. Instead we get a big book. Nevertheless, Karen Halttunen has done her homework: the research has been tremendous, the notes and bibliography are impressive, and the text is peppered with hundreds of quotes — and gives us some real insight into an area of American culture and history where we might have never bothered to look.

In the 1830s and 1840s, as the American Industrial Revolution was getting under way, thousands of young men were leaving their farms and families and migrating to the cities in search of work. Here was young America on the make: knapsack in hand, clothing coarse and homespun, the bloom of outdoor youth on his cheeks, the rustic entered the city to seek fame and fortune. Ever since Ben Franklin's dramatic entrance into colonial Philadelphia, the image of American youth standing heroically on the urban threshold had captured the spirit of America. The era of the self-made man had arrived.

But danger threatened. The city was a world of strangers, and the advice manuals of the age warned raw-boned youth to beware of tricksters — hypocritical confidence men and painted women out to seduce and ruin him. Yet youth's worst enemy lurked not in the streets but in his own breast. It was feared that hypocrisy paid off in an urban environment, and naive youth might have to learn the tricks of the con-man to get ahead in business or politics. This of course is exactly what happened.

On his travels through Jacksonian America, Tocqueville was struck by the "restlessness of temper" that plagued Americans anxious to improve their lot. Because they lived suspended between the facts of their present social condition and the promise of the future, they were prone to anxieties about their social identity. "Thus, not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever on himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."

To resolve this ontological crisis of social confidence, the hundreds of manuals that poured off the presses after 1830 called for perfect sincerity as an antidote to hypocrisy. Women were raskened to be more sincere than men; to oppose hypocrisy in the streets. The battleground was the parlour, where the aspiring middle classes worked to establish their claims to social status, to that elusive quality of "gentility". Men and women policed the threshold of gentility were admitted or excluded on the basis of their genteel performance.

Etiquette books laid down hundreds of rules. Polite people were not to yawn, sigh, spit, scratch, cough and exasperate, or examine their handkerchiefs after blowing their noses. The evils of public nail-painting, teeth-picking, and hair-combing were strenuously condemned. The complexity of these rules suggested the difficulty of fashionably sustaining the genteel performance. There were repeated injunctions against picking one's nose or blowing it with the fingers, scratching the head, staring, breaking wind, swearing or talking loudly, and losing the temper. There were deep fears among the middle classes of the vulnerability of the genteel performance, and nightmares about being exposed as a secret slob.

The manuals preached that "To practice sincerity, is to speak as we think; to do as we profess; to perform what we promise; and really to be what we would seem and appear to be." There were even fashions to enhance

the effect of sincerity. The sentimental figure was long and willowy, with narrow, sloping shoulders, and a slender waist. The primary colour was grey. The overall effect was meant to be one of demure self-effacement: effacing a woman's body was an effort to reveal her soul. Hats went out of style and were replaced by the bonnet, which focused attention on the face by framing it with a simple oval line. Beautiful thoughts and sentiments were supposed to shine through healthy skin, which meant that drinking and smoking cigars were proscribed. This transparency was the sentimentalists' answer to the problem of hypocrisy in the modern world, and not surprisingly it didn't work.

In the view of contemporary moralists, however, the middle-class pursuit of fashion was itself hypocritical. The greatest evil was symbolized by the "bland, smooth-tongued, genteel fashionable companion" trying to make a good impression. Worst of all, the fashionable confidence game was being played by women, too. Con-men and painted women had gotten into the parlour. The problem of hypocrisy created a vicious circle. The sentimental demand for sincerity generated social forms labelled as sincere, but once these conventions became fashionable they were condemned as hypocrisy. The arbiters of middle-class culture, wrung their hands and admitted that they couldn't have it both ways. They realized the futility of establishing sincere forms of daily conduct in the rough and tumble world of America on the make.

One of the most significant expressions of sentimental culture was the cult of mourning. Those who properly mourned the dead maintained beautiful cemeteries, which stood as testimony to their respectability. Those who failed to mourn their dead and let their graveyards fall into ruin could not be trusted to practise the lofty principles they preached: they were confidence men. Rules for genteel mourning were

drawn up that ultimately subordinated the sentiment of bereavement to the respectable performance of bereavement. Even Godey's *Ladies' Book* (the fashion bible of the day), whose columns regularly included advice on mourning attire, delivered periodic sentimental apologies for its contributions to the formalization of bereavement.

In the 1850s parlour games became popular, and the theatre began to ridicule the social pretensions and blunders of the newly rich. The cult of sincerity was on the wane, and the middle class began to feel confident enough to poke fun at itself. Sentimental sincerity simply could not govern conduct in a world of strangers. The genteel performance became more theatrical, the parlour stage, and the message was that middle-class social life was a charade, and the struggle for genteel status a confidence game. Confidence men and painted women, it was finally admitted, included all Americans on the make.

There is a kind of moral to this story. The American middle class still regards transparency as a sound moral ideal for personal conduct, but the villainous con-man has been welcomed back to where he belongs: into the mainstream of American middle-class culture. When Dale Carnegie advises his readers to smile in order to win friends and influence people, he insists on the sincerity of smiles. Horatio Alger's hero Dick rises from boot-black to respectability using all the tricks of the con-man. It all goes to show how much the world has changed, or hasn't.

Sharon Zukin's *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (212pp. Johns Hopkins University Press, £12.75, 0 8018 2694 2) looks at the social and economic forces which influence real estate development in modern cities, changing ways in which people live and replacing declining industries with service-based capital. One chapter looks at the relationship between capital shifts and the culture avant-garde in urban America.

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120, Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SP

APRIL 29 1983



## Beastly brainwork

Stephen Stich

STEPHEN WALKER

Animal Thought  
437pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£17.50.  
0 7100 9037 4

A few years ago, I published a paper in a relatively obscure journal posing some problems about applying common-sense psychological terms like "belief" to animals. Hardly had the paper appeared when the postman delivered a long, vitriolic manuscript attacking both my arguments and my tone. The author of the critique was quite certain that there was a hidden motive behind my rather bland philosophical reflections on animal belief. He was a radical vegetarian, and on his view I was a closet carnivore — a running dog of the slaughterhouse industry. The accusation left me stupefied, a reaction that I now think quite naïve. After all, from Descartes's time down to the present, much of what has been written about the mental life of non-human animals has been motivated by one hidden agenda or another.

In the first two chapters of Stephen Walker's book, some of these hidden agendas are reviewed. For Descartes it was important that animals did not have souls capable of thought, lest he be faced with the theological embarrassment of a heaven cluttered with the souls of bugs and beasts. For Darwin, Romanes and Huxley, it was equally important that animals are capable of rudimentary thought and feeling, since if they are not, the gradualism and evolutionary continuity essential to Darwinism would be threatened. In more recent years, as Walker suggests in his last chapter, the various efforts to teach apes to communicate in language have been motivated, at least in part, by opposition to Chomsky's nativist thesis, which holds that much knowledge essential to the acquisition of language is innate, and unique to the human species. In a field where polemics and ideology are the norm, Walker's book is a refreshing exception. It has no hidden agenda. The bulk of its four hundred pages is devoted to surveying and summarizing the literature on animal thought in a way that makes it accessible to the non-specialist.

The first problem to be confronted by anyone interested in the mental life of animals is a definitional one. Just what is meant by such terms as "thought", "perception", "awareness" and the like? Without some account of how these terms are to be used, we do not know what is being asked when we ponder whether animals can think or perceive. Walker's approach to this problem is, I think, exactly right. He makes no attempt to give abstract or theoretical definitions. Rather, he stipulates that questions about the mental lives of animals are to be understood as asking how similar their mental lives are to our own. "Questions about thought in animals" are to be rephrased "in the form 'Do animals have mental lives like ours?'". We can thus ask a number of separate questions, such as: 'Do animals have visual systems which work like ours?' 'Do animals have mental imagery like ours?' 'Do animals have hopes and fears like ours?' In effect, Walker is proposing that we anchor our questions about the mental life of animals by analogy to our own case. Fido has thoughts or images or fears if he undergoes something like what we do when we describe ourselves as having thoughts or images or fears.

Having opted for a Protagonist account of mental states in which man is the measure, the next problem to be confronted is how hypotheses about animal mentality are to be tested. How do we know whether a dog or a rat or an ape is having experiences similar to our own? Here Walker suggests that we argue from similar causes to similar effects. Our own mental states are obviously causally dependent on the structure and state of our brains. So if a beast has a brain with a similar structure, it is a reasonable bet that it has similar experiences as well. To buttress the argument from anatomy and physiology, we can look at how the animal behaves. If it exhibits similar behaviour under similar circumstances, then there is still more reason to think that its experiences are similar to ours.

Though Walker is not entirely clear on this point, it would appear that he endorses both the "similar brain entails similar experiences" principle and its converse, since he often argues from the dissimilarity of brains to the dissimilarity of experiences. On this point, those who advocate a "functionalist" account of mentality would part company with him. For a

functionalist, what is essential to a thought or experience is the causal role it plays in interacting with other mental states, with stimuli and with behaviour. Moreover, the pattern of interacting roles exhibited by my mental states could perfectly well be duplicated by the states of an organism or a machine whose physiology or hardware was quite different from my own. On the functionalist view, the mental stands to the physical roughly as a computer's program stands to its hardware. One and the same program can be run on machines with very different hardware. Thus a functionalist would dispute Walker's suggestion that a robot could not have "intentions and memories like our own". However, this looming theoretical dispute with functionalism has little practical significance in the context of Walker's book, since in those cases where differences in brain structure are taken as evidence for differences in mental states, there are generally abundant behavioural differences as well. And for a functionalist the latter, if not the former, are sufficient to establish the thesis that the animal under consideration has a mental life different from our own.

Perhaps the most impressive example of Walker's strategy for establishing that some animals have a mental life not unlike our own is his discussion of memory. It is conceded on all sides that the past history of an animal will influence its future behaviour. Pavlovian and Skinnerian conditioning illustrates this pervasive phenomenon. However, in the case of human memory it seems introspectively clear that we retain memory traces of various events — internal images or representations which enable us to report on what we have experienced long after the event. Do animals have memories of this sort, or is the effect of conditioning simply to link a certain pattern of stimuli with a certain pattern of response? A deeply entrenched tradition in twentieth-century experimental psychology insists that the latter sort of "minimalist" account is the correct one, and that there is no justification for postulating human-like memory experiences to explain why an animal's past history influences its future behaviour. (Indeed, in its most virulent Skinnerian form, this tradition denies human-like memory traces to humans. Walker, to his credit, refuses to take such nonsense seriously.)

Walker's case against the minimalist

has two components. First, he recounts numerous ingenious experiments reported in the literature which are aimed at demonstrating that sometimes an animal's behaviour cannot be explained unless we postulate an inner representation of past experiences. In the simplest of these, caged animals were allowed to see the experimenter conceal food. After the passage of various amounts of time, the animals were released from the cage. When the animals regularly proceed directly to the spot where the food is hidden, Walker argues, this is evidence that they have retained an internal representation of the food being hidden. In some rather more sophisticated experiments, pigeons are shown a certain stimulus pattern (a horizontal line, say) and then, some time later, they are required to peck at one of several stimulus patterns. They are rewarded with food only if they peck at the pattern they have been shown. A bird which successfully learns to peck at the pattern it had been shown most recently must retain some internal representation of that pattern.

The second component in Walker's critique of the minimalist view of memory surveys the literature on brain damage in man and animals. Though the evidence is limited, it appears that when the hippocampus area of the brain is removed in human subjects, they display a curious pattern of memory loss. They can report normally on their life before the operation, but have difficulty laying down any new memories that last for more than a few minutes. One patient never learned the location of the lavatory in the hospital in which he convalesced, nor the address of the house he lived in afterwards. Oddly, though, such patients can learn new automatic routines and habits. One patient who played the piano could learn new pieces and perform them if given the opening bars, though he professed no recollection of ever having heard the music before. What makes all of this important for the study of animal memory is that monkeys have analogous difficulties in laying down long-term memories after the output from the hippocampus has been surgically eliminated. However, as with the human piano-player, these brain-damaged monkeys can readily acquire new and fairly complex motor habits by subjecting them to selective reward and punishment. In the light of these results it is hard not to conclude,

with Walker, that monkeys have memories of past experiences which are not utterly dissimilar from our own.

Throughout Walker's book, the minimalist (or the "killjoy", as David Dennett calls him) can be glimpsed grumbling sceptically just off-stage. Walker's preoccupation with the minimalist's scepticism — understandable enough in the light of the history of twentieth-century psychology — is responsible for some of the weaknesses and some of the strengths of the volume. Under the former head, I would include Walker's reluctance to offer any but the most sketchy and vague hypotheses about the cognitive processes that might underlie the experimental results he reviews. Postulating some sort of memory trace which is independent of direct stimulus-response links is about as bold a hypothesis as is offered. What sorts of mechanisms animals might use to exploit and manipulate these representations is a topic that remains unexplored.

But if behaviourist killjoys have led Walker to excessive theoretical caution, they have also provoked some useful and thoroughly delightful anti-behaviourist critiques. Walker notes, for example, that many experimental tests of the psychological capacities of animals reveal hardly any difference between goldfish and chimpanzees. But surely, he argues, the most reasonable explanation of such a paradoxical result is that the tests themselves are to blame. Nor is this just idle speculation. Most of the experiments used to explore the psychological capacities, and in particular the learning abilities, of animals are variations on the theme of classical conditioning. However, there is evidence that an isolated spinal cord can "learn" to associate stimuli and response in the Pavlovian paradigm. Small wonder, then, that animals with large brains and those with tiny brains exhibit little difference in learning ability, when conditioning is used as the test of ability.

Walker's attacks on the behaviourist's scepticism and on their often myopic methods are welcome and well aimed. But the central achievement of his book is not a polemical one. He has assembled, clearly and systematically, a vast amount of information about animal brains and behaviour. In so doing he has created a valuable resource for anyone interested in the mental life of animals.

## Learning the lingo

P. N. Johnson-Laird

ERIC WANNER and LILA R. GLITSMAN (Editors)  
Language Acquisition: The State of the Art

532pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£27.50 (paperback), £10.95.  
0 521 23817 X

Once had an argument about whether it is difficult to understand how a child learns its native tongue. My antagonist would not concede that there was any intellectual problem whatsoever. Treading unwittingly in the footsteps of St Augustine, she thought that it was obvious how you learned language: you listen, and thereafter you could imitate the same things with the same labels. I tried to explain that there was more to meaning than this "common sense" philosophy, and that a language also has particular speech sounds, intonation contours, and a grammar, which all have to be mastered. But she brushed my objections aside like a good Tory minister of education: your parents would instruct you on those matters, too. I withdrew in considerable frustration, unable to convince her of what is truly a major scientific puzzle.

What I needed was Eric Wanner and Lila R. Glitsman's splendid book. It contains the best possible case for the complexity of the problem: a compilation of the very diverse approaches to it that psychologists and linguists currently pursue. Indeed, with the possible exception of the Augustinian behaviourism of my opponent, any half-way sensible idea on the topic is likely to be supported by some worker in the field. And Wanner and Glitsman have gone out of their way to encompass as much of the variety as possible; they have brought together fifteen chapters by leading

American scholars (including two English expatriates). The disparate nature of expert opinion emerges immediately from the editors' introduction, which gives us the state of "the state of the art", and, refreshingly, submits the subsequent chapters to some stringent criticism.

The first disagreement is about the general nature of acquiring a native tongue. Does a child learn language? Or does it grow within the child as an innately determined mental organ triggered by experience? Or, as Bever argues in his contribution, is language an abstract Platonic form that the child discovers in much the same way that mathematicians are supposed to discover the properties of numbers? At the heart of this controversy is a perennial argument about the relative importance of innate human nature and contingent human experience. Its focus is grammar. If natural language calls for a transformational grammar of the sort formulated by Chomsky, then children must acquire such a grammar from the relatively fragmentary evidence of the utterances they hear and the reactions they get to their own remarks. There is a well-known proof, already reviewed in the chapter by Kenneth Wexler, that a formal procedure for identifying any but the simplest of grammars can succeed only with feedback about both what is, and what is not, grammatical. Yet young children receive no such instruction, and virtually no "reinforcement" for speaking grammatically.

There are several potential ways out of the dilemma. One can argue, as do several of the contributors, that grammatical learning depends on the meanings of utterances. These meanings may in turn reflect a cognitive construal of the world. Hence, a child's basic grammatical categories may not be purely syntactic ones, but a semantically motivated set of cases, such as "actor" and "object of action". If this assumption held for the whole of linguistic development, however, it

would imply that there is no grammar in the mind but merely certain ineluctable patterns in the way people think. Word order, as Dan Slobin puts it, would be a natural reflection of the order of thought. One is reminded of the splendid prejudice that French is the best language since its grammar alone corresponds to the true order of logical thinking. The trouble is, of course, that children do learn other languages, and so much of any language (even French) fails to correlate with clear semantic categories: not all nouns denote objects, and not all verbs denote actions. Moreover, three-year-olds tune in remarkably quickly to many such aspects of grammar, eg, the gender system of German, the inflectional system of Turkish. It seems, as Michael Maratsos argues, that children are able to form purely syntactic rules that are not based on supporting semantic information.

Another much canvassed guide to early grammatical learning is the tacit knowledge of mothers. Perhaps they knew more than they can say, and implicitly direct their children along an easy route to grammatical knowledge, using a simplified syntax and gestures that demarcate important syntactical units. Unfortunately, Marilyn Slobin has found children to be singularly oblivious to such cues. Worse still, grammar appears to develop in the absence of any linguistic information whatsoever. Susan Ouldin-Meadow has studied the spontaneous gestures that profoundly deaf children invent to communicate with their hearing parents. These children string signs together according to syntactic rules, and their "utterances" show a striking structural similarity to those of their speaking peers.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there really is innate grammatical

knowledge. Thomas Roeper, in an outstanding integration of theory and experiment, spells out an ingenious learning mechanism. Cognition triggers specific grammatical hypotheses; for example, an underlying grasp of causation triggers hypotheses about the ways in which it may be expressed syntactically. In developing grammars, children pay attention only to sentences that are relevant to their current grammatical hypotheses. They use these sentences to choose the appropriate syntactic format from a finite number of possibilities laid down innately. Of course they attempt to understand other sentences, too, but they do not use them to advance the construction of grammar. This idea is novel, and it explains a number of well-attested phenomena, such as children's inability to absorb explicit grammatical instruction. It also solves the major puzzle of how speakers can converge on the same language despite their vastly different linguistic histories.

The appeal to innate constraints on the form of grammar depends more on the failure of alternative hypotheses than on the existence of overwhelming positive evidence. Those who wish to resist the appeal have one more idea yet to try: for each rule in the grammar there may be a corresponding rule for semantic interpretation. This is a familiar procedure in developing a semantics for a formal language, and the logician, Richard Montague, defended its applicability to natural language, contrary to the views of both Russell and Chomsky. But, if Montague was right, grammar might be constructed from inferences based on semantic rules and a knowledge of the words in utterances. Children have to solve the puzzle of what syntactic rules correlate with given semantic rules. Indeed, the semantic rules

themselves might not be inborn, but derive from innate constraints on cognitive processes.

Similar appeals to the doctrine of innate ideas have been made to account for children's acquisition of lexical meanings. A six-year-old may know as many as 14,000 words, and no one has succeeded in formulating a satisfactory explanation of how so much can be acquired so rapidly. Since language is a vehicle for intentional communication, you can say, "from now on, let's call that stuff over there, whatever it is, blodge". Henceforth, when you want to refer to that stuff, you can do so using the word, "blodge", and I can grasp what you are saying. Children tune in to this fact about language very rapidly. They readily create a new word, as Eve Clark shows, if they do not have access to the *mot juste*. "It broomed her", said a two-year-old, thereby coining a new verb in order to account for his baby sister's tears. The trouble with communicative intentions, however, is that they play havoc with the traditional idea of learning a verbal label for all objects that have some set of particular features in common. In fact, both Melissa Bowerman and Susan Carey establish that children latch on to the meaning of a word as an unanalysed "package" rather than as an entity composed of separate features to be acquired piecemeal.

Learning to speak our native tongue is arguably the most important and the most difficult intellectual task that ever confronts us. We cannot all aspire to genius with the written word, but anyone with any linguistic curiosity at all should dip into this book. A browse should convince the sceptical that how we learn to speak is indeed a very puzzling question. I shall have the book ready to throw at the next person who tells me that the answer is obvious.

## Lessons in moderation

David Raphael

PETER JONES

Home's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context  
230pp. Edinburgh University Press.  
£17.50.  
0 85224 443 6

David Hume seems now to be as popular a subject for scholarly books as any of the great philosophers. In the English-speaking world at least, the number of such studies during the past twenty years appears to be as high as that for Aristotle or Kant. Conferences commemorating the bicentenary of Hume's death provided a stimulus, in 1976, but the rising tide could be discerned well before that date.

The fact is that scholars appreciate now as never before the subtlety, originality, exceptional honesty, and many-sided character of Hume's thought. One welcome feature of recent work has been a wider recognition that Hume is a great thinker not only in the theory of knowledge but also in ethics and the philosophy of religion, and that he is in addition a thinker of significance in political theory and in economics. Another has been the attention paid to the influence of other thinkers upon him.

On the latter topic there has been a brisk debate about the effect of Newton upon Hume's aims and methods, how far Hume was a Newtonian, and whether he moved

away in his later writings from the Newtonian stance of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. This debate takes up part, but only part, of a question about influences discussed by Norman Kemp Smith in 1941, in what is still the most valuable single book on Hume's philosophy. Kemp Smith emphasized the paramount influence upon Hume of Hutcheson and of Newton. He described them as conflicting influences, Hutcheson being the dominant one for "the really distinctive features" of Hume's philosophy. The more recent debate has been largely confined to the Newtonian influence alone.

Peter Jones offers a collection of Hume studies that draws attention to a different pair of influences which have been relatively neglected by Hume scholars: Cicero on the one hand and French thinkers on the other. In the first essay of the book, perhaps written last but anyway aiming to depict a unity of theme, Dr Jones also challenges the prevalent assumption that Newton was, at least initially, an important influence, and he is apparently inclined to challenge Kemp Smith's view that Hutcheson was the dominant influence.

Jones has undoubtedly made out his positive case relating to Cicero and French writers. The *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* were modelled on Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, and Jones provides ample evidence that Hume was well read in Cicero and referred to him frequently. Jones also argues persuasively that Ciceronian *moderatio* is to be found in Hume's later attitude, notably in his

Essays, to scepticism and in his "fruition of the different virtues". The "French connection" has many links. According to Jones, the strongest one for Hume's theory of knowledge was Malbranche, but Hume was also influenced by the Port-Royal *Logic* and of course by Bayle. In aesthetics, Jones shows convincingly, the strongest link is with the Abbé Dubos. What of his negative case minimizing the effect of Newton? Jones's strength lies in the details of historical scholarship and in the first essay he builds up a powerful argument for the view that Hume knew little of Newton's actual thought and that the references to Newtonian method are, like others of the time, no general to be called genuinely Newtonian. The advocates of Newtonian influence will have their work cut out to maintain their position against this criticism.

Yet despite these clear merits, Jones's book is disappointing for two reasons. First, it is not a coherent whole. The opening chapter, like the subtitle, suggests that the book as a whole is designed to illustrate the Ciceronian and French background of Hume's thought. What in fact follows? Chapter Two is an independent study of possible sources of Hume's views on religion and the associated topic of testimony; there are some references to Cicero and to French writers, but more to various English authors. Chapter Three comes back firmly to the French connection, with a substantial account of Dubos in relation to Hume's essays "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" and "Of the Standard of Taste".

Chapter Four is a tangential little piece, the main purpose of which is to show that Hume did not have a theory of language. Although it begins by saying that Hume was familiar with contemporary speculation on language in French — but also in English, Scottish, and German — writers, it is not clear why this chapter is included at all. One aim, says Jones, is to alert readers to Hume's views on rhetoric, but "these issues will not be taken up in this book". The final Chapter Five begins by trying to show that the Ciceronian virtue of moderation is found in Hume's views of the natural, his philosophy of knowledge and of action alike. It then suddenly alters course and looks for comparisons between Hume and Wittgenstein! What on earth has that to do with the Ciceronian and French context? or with the more general theme of sources of Hume's thought?

The second reason for disappointment is that the details of Jones's careful scholarship obscure the view. He must have realized this, since he has added long summaries to the end of each section, but even they are not always easy to follow. On broader issues, perhaps, the writer as well as the reader fails to see the wood for the trees. In his short chapter on language, Jones compares Hume's account of the role of a form of words in promising with a statement by Fufendorf (that discourse presupposes a tacit promise to use words in their received meaning). The comparison is not apt, in my opinion, but it also suggests a failure to appreciate the real importance of Hume's account of promises both as a

solution to a thorny problem, and as a key element in his structure of artificial virtues.

It is useful to know that Hume's values in ethics and his later attitude to scepticism were affected by Ciceronian moderation. But Hume's signal achievement in philosophy does not depend on the moderate temper of his human attitudes. It depends on an immoderately keen eye for seeing new problems and an immoderately deft hand for building imaginative yet realistic structures. The point of Kemp Smith's claim that Hutcheson was the dominant influence is not to suggest that Hume derived many details from Hutcheson but to look upon one feature of Hutcheson's thought as the spring-board for Hume's greatest leap and so for Hume's naturalism. The importance of this lies in Hume's epistemology and metaphysics, not in ethics. In ethics Hume did not follow Hutcheson's actual theory as a first step, but the significant part of his ethics lies in what he added, especially in his conception of artificial virtues. He did not derive this from Hutcheson. I think the spring-board in this case was Hobbes, but Hume may not have been aware of it, just as he may not have realized what he owed to Hutcheson.

I am not complaining that Peter Jones has chosen to give up the benefit of his researches on Hume the fox, learned from others many things rather than to write a different sort of book on Hume the hedgehog, who did marvels with one or two big things. It is a pity, however, that his pursuit of a fox should obscure the hedgehog.

## Emergency exit

Rosemary Dinnage

CAROLYN STEEDMAN

The Tidy House  
263pp. Virago. £9.95 (paperback, £5.95).  
0 85068 321 4

The Tidy House is an oddity, at best original, at worst a confusing ragbag. Carolyn Steedman has taken a fairly bald (but, as she says, it helps to anticipate dullness in children's work) narrative by three eight-year-old girls from a primary school class that she was teaching in 1976, and used it as a peg for a whole range of suggestions about working-class childhood, the experience of femaleness, and children's use of writing. The peg gives way under the strain like a rickety cloakroom peg overloaded with satchels and gymshoes and overcoats; but there is some unusual incidental material to be picked up nevertheless.

The story produced by the children is taken with the greatest earnestness and the book set out in scholarly fashion with notes, appendices, and facsimiles (Carolyn Steedman is severe about the habit of reading children's writing, especially little girls', for its amusement value). Written conservatively, the children's story concerns two couples who are friends, and their children. The main difficulty with the book is in taking its central thesis seriously: that this quite jolly narrative is about "warped" lives, cramped hopes, opportunistic loss, that it gives a glimpse of the (apparently) disagreeable fate of being a girl and potential mother, that to fact the authors of it knew, as all children (she says) do, that "with all the love and affection and the meals got (at what odds) to the table, quite simply, it would have been better had they never existed".

In fact both the story and the children's taped conversations that are appended would seem to suggest reality and hopefulness; though the world the children came from was in a deprived area. There are visits and

many cups of tea, a back garden with sunflowers, rose bushes, and pet animals, a birthday with cake and presents, and Jo and Mark who "sit up all night kissing" because they want a baby and "went asleep happy". It is true that one of the fictional characters, Carl (one of the girl authors was Carlo) does a good deal of whining and gets a slap, but children do love a naughty character to gloat over in their stories. The high point of pretentiousness is the author's suggestion that for such little girls as the writers, being working-class is their "primary emergency" and being female their "secondary emergency" — a distinction actually taken from concentration camp victims.

Steedman promises more than she delivers when she indicates that the children's narrative and their taped conversations will show how the acquisition of written symbols enables the child to manipulate and remodel possibilities. As she says, this is an important and fairly unexplored area, but there is no real indication as to how Carla, Liddle, or Melissa have done that through their writing. In any case, the facsimile shows that the children have sometimes been misread ("Is there still no charge? Dor, dor, dor, dor" should be "Is there still no charge? Dor, dor, dot, dot" and the tapes appear to indicate that some of their ideas were suggested by the teacher.

Steedman is best when she gets away from over-interpretation of the "Tidy House" story to discuss in chapters that could make separate essays, children's writing — and writing about children — in the past. Even though little girls are more verbal and literate than boys, it is curious that the daily journals from the nineteenth century that she quotes were all kept by girls; perhaps boys of around the same age were already away at boarding-school learning rugby and Latin instead of meticulous observation and the use of English. There are also moving quotations about little working girls from the other end of the social scale, by Mayhew, an author who stuck to a maximum of observation, and minimum of comment.

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# COUNTERPOINT

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# Between strategy and ethics

Keith Robbins

MICHAEL HOWARD

Clausewitz  
79pp. Oxford University Press. £7.95  
(paperback, £1.95).  
0 19 28760 2

The Causes of Wars and other essays  
248pp. Temple Smith. £10.  
0 85117 222 9

Michael Howard's new collection of essays by implication urges participants in the contemporary defence debate to give history a chance. He does not underestimate the gravity and complexity of the problems confronting mankind but suggests that the study of history at least puts them in a comprehensible context. His new study of Clausewitz, whose name frequently appears in the essays, reinforces the point. Although the experience of a Prussian officer in the Napoleonic Wars, and his reflections on them, may not at first sight appear to have much relevance to contemporary debates, Professor Howard argues that few if any other writers on war have succeeded, as Clausewitz did, in transcending the specific circumstances of their time. Of course, detailed aspects of tactics and logistics were out of date within decades of Clausewitz's death in 1831, and some of his prescriptions remain only of interest to the military historian. Nevertheless, it is his cast of mind, coupled with the effects of immense and exhausting labour, which makes *On War* still a stimulating work. Howard has a familiarity with its subtleties and nuances which can only come from his experience in translating it (with Peter Paret) some years ago.

The opening chapter places Clausewitz "in his time" and suggests that although able to pass as a junior this introverted autodidact was temperamentally an outsider. Thus he was both participant and detached observer in the battles he experienced. The particular situation of Prussia gave him an awareness of the dimensions of struggle – and a concern with not just military or political reform but even moral renewal. Subsequent chapters expound Clausewitz on the theory and practice of war. Is war, he asked, an art or a science? Can it have a theory? Can one study war and deepen knowledge of its complexity without becoming a pedant? The answer is to remain keenly aware of the limitations of theory as itself an aid to deep theory.

Specific aspects of Clausewitz's approach are considered against the background of a constant dialectic between the moral and physical. Howard discusses the relationship between ends and means in Clausewitz's thought, emphasizing throughout his unrelenting awareness of bloody battle as the reality which no strategic analyst can or should ignore in the welter of technical speculation. It is, however, the distinction he drew between "limited" and "absolute" (or "total") war which has been of such significance to many twentieth-century writers, and Howard stresses that Clausewitz sought explanations which were historical, metaphysical and empirical.

The final chapter considers the legacy of Clausewitz. Initially in Germany but then throughout the world, in Britain his work was criticized for its lack of attention to maritime or economic war by those who thought that there could be a less bloody way to victory than *On War* seemed to suppose. Bringing the picture up to the present, Howard concludes that whereas in Clausewitz's day it had been necessary to try to transcend the limitations of the conduct of war by the constraints of the real world, what we now need is to impose such limits.

The volume of essays is, in effect, a second collection of *Studies in War and Peace* and might perhaps have been given a similar general title. It does contain the Creighton Lecture on "The Causes of War", which occupies the first place, but no other contribution is specifically devoted to this age-old problem. Except incidentally, therefore, it is a mistake to think of this selection of fifteen pieces as a series of essays on this theme. The lecture on

such benefits accruing in an exchange of nuclear weapons are much greater than they have ever previously been. It follows that the chances of maintaining peace are correspondingly greater. It is for this reason he argues that the abolition of nuclear weapons would not be an unmitigated blessing.

"War and the Nation State", his inaugural lecture as Chichele Professor, traces this fluctuating relationship, interpreted in the first place through the views of his predecessors in the Chair. This century contains many examples of the abuse of the armed force which is the legitimate monopoly of the State, but we now have many examples where the erosion of that monopoly can itself produce a return to barbarism. This example is another illustration of Howard's constant awareness of the potential for evil in what might at first sight appear to be an improvement. It is fitting that there should be reference to Niebuhr in his reflection on the life and work of Martin Wright. Power and ethics, he suggests, are best thought of in terms of dimensions, and effective political action must take constant account of both. Exclusive concern with ethical values without consideration of practical activity in the dimension of power is as unhelpful as the mere accumulation of coercive power without concern for its ethical ends is offensive. This two-dimensional view informs the remaining essays. The danger confronting the West is likely to be a disarming attack with strictly limited military objectives. He stresses the important distinction to be drawn between limited and total intentions. The challenge is to be able to provide effective armed forces capable of deterring by being able to inflict immediate and intolerable costs on the attacker. If such forces are not provided, at no mean expense, three miserable options remain; first use of nuclear weapons, a long war of attrition, or making terms with the adversary. It is therefore appropriate to consider "The Relevance of Traditional Strategy", not that he does so in any simple-minded fashion. He

not in the tremulous tones of Corporal Jones in *Dod's Army*. Romantic gestures will do nothing to help, be tell his opponent, ringing down the curtain on doom at the close of a tutorial, International conflict remains what it has always been, the ineluctable product of diversity of interests, perceptions and cultures. In any good, Governments of every colour might find that they had common interests in defeating what Howard calls "generalized political violence". In "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy" he lambasts the strange neglect in the West of its social dimensions.

Broader historical perspectives are offered in "War in the Making and Unmaking of Europe" and "The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal" – the latter a deliberate echo of Liddell Hart's book with that title. The first survey is a commentary on the fact that, for better or worse, war has played a fundamental part in the development of Europe. Concerning the "British way", he has little time for amphibious enterprises and their supporters. Hitler's Germany was only defeated by the unlimited application of force by Britain and the resources of the United States and the Soviet Union. As well as these broad sweeps, Howard also finds room for the study of individuals – short but illuminating appraisals of Liddell Hart, Montgomery and Kissinger conclude the volume. Time and again there is a reiteration that for British statesmen and strategists there were no easy answers. It is a thought that leads naturally into the two "controversial pieces" in the book. In one of them he takes issue with Colin Gray "On fighting a nuclear war". He is fearful of the dangers inherent in the assumption that it is politically easier to produce nuclear missiles rather than trained and effective manpower. The better-known piece, however, is the rejoinder to E. P. Thompson. The world is a dangerous place but, while the scale of possible disaster may be unique, there is no reason to panic or despair. We have been here before – almost. And when Howard tells us not to panic it is

## The awful aftermath

James Warnock

IVAN TYRRELL  
The Survival Option: A guide to living through nuclear war  
227pp. Cape. £7.95.  
0 224 02059 5

It seems that nuclear war is not as bad as we thought. We must be glad of this, because every day that passes makes it more likely to happen. It will be pretty nasty when it comes, of course, but as long as we all live in, or have access to, shelters in target-free areas (this rules out virtually all of South-East England) we can be safe. If a little uncomfortable. Not all of us, actually; you and I may be among the unlucky fifteen million – or the unlucky forty million if things work out badly. Once we have crawled into our shelters, or ditches, or under our cars ("Put earth in the boot too, but not in the engine if you hope to use it again") and have lain low for a few days – after having checked that we remembered to bring our passports and cheque books ("Don't forget tin openers!") – we can begin to get out and about again, keeping handkerchiefs over our mouths at first, and should start to think about "Regeneration of the Community" (i.e. dispose of the dead, care for the elderly, provide power for heat, light, and other uses, establish vegetable gardens and chicken runs...).

This is a strange, but increasingly popular, kind of fatalism. *The Survival Option* presents itself as a practical guidebook, but it makes bizarre reading, combining the utterly banal (stocking your shelter with food, making a hammock) with passages of caustic horror ("If you are unlucky enough to be blinded by the light, you must still throw yourself in the

direction of any shelter you remember having seen a moment before") to create a whole that is worryingly lacking in credibility. This is a problem that emerges directly, I think, from Ivan Tyrrell's central thesis, which he presents in the opening chapters, that nuclear war is increasingly likely; and survivable in considerable numbers given the right kind of preparation. In making his case, he criticizes the Government for failing to take measures to protect the population, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament for "raising anxiety levels" by overstating the likely damage caused by nuclear war.

Tyrrell is undoubtedly right to question the motives of post-war governments; the provision of shelter facilities sufficient to ensure the survival of national and regional administrative structures implies at best a desire on the part of defence planners to have their cake and eat it, at worst a lack of faith in the theory of deterrence coupled with a disregard for the consequences of its failure. But, of the three clearest ways of trying to improve this scandalous state of affairs – pressure on the Government to reduce the likelihood of war, pressure on the Government to minimize its effects, or individual action to ensure one's own survival – the last is surely the least morally defensible, and to argue, as this book does, that it is the only option is to act exactly as Tyrrell accuses the unilateralists of acting: "Members of the public are encouraged to feel despair and helplessness in the face of the current overwhelming potential for destruction." What could be more desperate than the belief that we must hide in holes in the ground from our own Government?

The hopeless pessimism of this position is camouflaged by the constant understatement of the effects of nuclear war. There is, admittedly,

mass of conflicting evidence in this area; Tyrrell's contention that adequate defence planning could reduce the number of deaths from forty million to fifteen million has built into it several highly optimistic assumptions – that it will be possible to evacuate the massed target areas (the emergency plans for Greater London show that we shall be not merely discouraged but actually prevented from doing anything), or that there will be a health service at least partially able to cope with injuries and illnesses in the first weeks following an attack. The section of the book that deals with "Regeneration of Your Community in the Aftermath" is just one page long.

I cannot see what is gained by taking this line. Of course it is true that it would be possible to increase the number of survivors (though the book makes clear that without governmental efforts on a vastly greater scale the effects of self-help would be marginal); but should we really be persuading ourselves that thirty million corpses are better than forty million? Tyrrell describes the attempt to survive as "an action which changes individuals from passive and fatalistic spectators of an insane political drama into men and women doing what they can, in a dangerous world, to take some control of their own destinies." This is a narrow and selfish attitude; we would surely do better to assert our rights as agents in the political arena, to hope that we can restore to it an element of sanity.

Anatol Rapoport's edition of *Clausewitz on War*, recently reissued in the Penguin Classics Series (46pp., £2.95, 0 14 044427 0), follows the lead of Colonel P. N. Mandelstam's Revised Edition (1968) of Colonel P. N. Mandelstam's translation, including all Volume I (except for the last chapter on night fighting) and all of the nine

## Look for the label

Andrew Saint

CHARLES JENCKS and WILLIAM CHAITKIN  
Current Architecture  
30pp. with 550 illustrations.  
Including 184 in colour. Academy  
Editions. £35.  
0 08570 760 0

Architecture today is more varied and interesting than at any other time in its history. Leading through the plates in this prodigally illustrated book, the reader may feel that the extravagant propositions and blurb amounts to more than hyperbole. Adventurous, rampant, frequently irresponsible, "tradition of Tom Paine and Jeremy Bentham", he concludes that the differences between them are too deeply rooted in personality-trait and experience to be resolved.

It is evident, therefore, that Howard's translation to the Regus Chair at Oxford has not diminished the vigour and urgency of his interest in contemporary issues, though he does feel compelled to apologize to his academic colleagues for his continuing involvement in current controversies. He does permit himself occasional remarks which suggest that it would be helpful if the contemporary world would go away and leave him more time for other historical pursuits. Indeed it is possible that the contemporary world will go away, though not in such circumstances as will promote unfettered freedom for historical scholarship.

Academic studies, Professor Howard readily concedes, cannot by themselves prevent war or resolve honest disagreements, but they can provide the necessary basis for reasoned discussion and then action. The diversity of purposes for which the items in this collection were produced inevitably leads to some repetition of substance and a certain unevenness in assertion and argument. Taken as a whole, however, this volume certainly stimulates thought. It is a testimony to the range of Howard's knowledge and power of exposition that he can place his rather heavy tanks on other people's academic lawns with relative impunity.

Like much instant cultural history, *Current Architecture* is in part promotion. No harm in that, so long as the readers know where they are. In fact the text bops about so skittishly and label succeeds label with such glibly rapidly that it is extremely hard to follow. A start might be made with the chapter on Post-Modernism, the one which Jencks has been assiduously tending and trimming ever since he helped fan it to light a decade ago. We have some idea by now what Post-Modernism is supposed to mean: up-to-date architectural method with a hefty overlay of historicism, "irony" and "wit" – the kind of thing which can

## Restorative urges

David Watkin

CHARLES DELLHEIM  
The Face of the Past: The preservation of the medieval inheritance in Victorian England  
214pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£15.  
0 521 23645 2

The theme of this book is the perennially fascinating one of the paradox that as England became the first industrial nation so it became increasingly preoccupied with its pre-industrial past. Its medieval architectural inheritance was not only preserved and reinterpreted in the buildings of the Gothic Revival but also preserved or, according to some contemporaries, destroyed, by an elaborate programme of "restoration". It is a vast and complex field to cover and Charles Dellheim concentrates on three principal topics: the rise of historical and archaeological societies in Yorkshire, the restoration of the city churches of York; and the neo-Gothic buildings of Manchester.

Professor Dellheim rightly emphasizes at the start that medievalism was not always a protest against nineteenth-century

be imposing, fresh and delightful but easily degenerates into archness and triviality, as Tom Wolfe savagely demonstrated in *From Bauhaus to Our House*. In the United States, Post-Modernism means above all Robert Venturi and his disciples, the latest "Chippendale" skyscraper in New York by that sly old dog, Philip Johnson, or Charles Moore's whimsical Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans. In Europe its aficionados include the post-Gradian monumentalist Ricardo Bofill in Barcelona, the lugubrious Aldo Rossi in Italy, and Hans Hollein of Vienna with his distorted, jewelled interiors. On home ground, Jencks throws in neo-vernacular projects like Jeremy Dixon's St Mark's Road housing in North Kensington, and one or two of James Stirling's many unbuilt projects.

But most of Stirling, along with Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, Terry Farrell and the rest of today's British avant-garde, falls under the rubric of another, yet more heterogeneous chapter, that on Late-Modernism. Here, bewilderingly, we encounter the "New York Five" and suadry other white-villa groupies still blockering and chewing over the Corbusian corpse; big-business moguls like John Portman and I. M. Pei recasting the tall building to fit their particular visions of sanitized executive efficiency; and the various proponents of "high tech", in other words those who prefer not to tuck the guts of their

buildings away but to make a bold, colourful splash of their piping and ducting (presumably to remind us that they know how it works which, in practice, they rarely seem to do). Here, in descending order of pretension, may be found the Pompidou Centre (Jencks is rather good on its "supermarket atmosphere of bemused consumption"), the Sainsbury Centre, the Renaissance Center, the Pacific Design Center, the Speerhuis Lelaure Centre, the Milton Keynes Shopping Centre and the Intersection Centre, lots of museums and galleries, corporate headquarters, a ski pavilion, endless contorted late-Corbusian villas (mostly in upstate New York) and various Japanese extravaganzas, on which Jencks is especially knowledgeable.

It is too soon to make sense of all this, but Jencks at least performs the service of laying it all out prettily and proving conclusively that his own categories do not work. If a Late-Modernist can fit in and out of Post-Modernism with the ease that he allows, the two concepts are not worth very much. The constant attempt to distinguish and label in terms of styles only obscures how much Jencks's current architects really have in common. In these international times, they read the same magazines, sit on the same juries in the same architectural schools and enter the same competitions; there is variety in their work, but not of the national or

cultural type found naturally in architecture before the jet age. Their cultural baggage looks bulky enough, but when opened it often turns out to be mere padding. After all the years of self-abnegation, it is still a pleasure to see architecture being turned out with style and verve and colour. What begins now to be increasingly tiresome is the pretence that much of it has a hidden meaning.

The last third of *Current Architecture* is an agreeable surprise. It covers the "alternative" forms of architecture that have grown up, particularly in the United States, over the past twenty years. William Chaitkin, the author of these chapters, whose untimely death has sadly been announced since the publication of this book, explores the genre exhaustively but with great good "medieval" artifacts and style appealed to many Victorians not in revolt against the earlier sections, where the author seems always to be trying to "second-guess" the latest trends. The restrictions of the subject are an undoubted help. While the typical Post-Modernist enjoys a richness of technological choice, the alternative or communal builder depends upon simple materials and leftovers. The one recurrent building type of any ambition in the alternative architecture of the 1960s and 1970s is the geodesic dome and its derivatives, some rigid and some inflatable. "dome fid" occupies, on and off, more than half of Chaitkin's pages. He traces the story from the various amateur domes of the early communes like Drop City, Libre and Lama, through the experimental constructions of Jay Baldwin and his helpers in the Santa Cruz Mountains, to Buckminster Fuller's own elaborate exhibition pavilion at Montreal. Slowly the craze collapsed, as the illogicalities and limitations of domical form became clear. Here is a complete, simple piece of very recent building history, excellently documented.

Chaitkin also examines the many vernacular styles of the day, personalized houseboats, "truckitecture", alternative technology houses, driftwood housing, space-capsule housing, as well as the occasional complete urban fantasy like Paolo Soleri's dislikable Arcosanti, set deep in the barrenness of the Arizona desert like some latter-day Taliesin West. Projects like Arcosanti apart, it is impossible not to feel that the buildings represented in Chaitkin's chapters, however ephemeral, reflect contemporary American culture more frankly than do the high-art styles which Jencks seeks to create and promote. For all his welcome richness and diversity, current architecture of the fashionable variety still flounders about in a cultural limbo.

This design (c 1929) for a firescreen for Waring and Gillow, the furniture people who were famously linked in a popular rhyme, is taken from *Design and the Public Good: Selected Writings 1930-1981* by Serge Chermayeff (41pp. MIT Press. £28. 0 262 16088 9).

standing of all three was widely different, and Langley, so far from being upper-class, was the son of a gardener. But these class references are important to Dellheim for their hints over *The Face of the Past* a faint miasma of fashionable Marxism. Not least, the text is nostalgically reminiscent of the male air that might have been breathed in the lecture room of a major architect: Norman Pearson for John Loughborough Pearson; Villuys for Villuys; Mickelthwait for Mickelthwait; Quaker, is wrongly described as having been educated at Cambridge.

Dellheim is weak on the historiography of medieval architecture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It seems to me a wrong interpretation of Horace Walpole to claim that "the restoration of medieval buildings was his favourite avocation" of his, and there is no reference to Robert Willis, arguably the greatest architectural historian of the country, who produced, *Mention of Villuys*, and his Cambridge contemporary Whewell would have prevented Dellheim from making the erroneous claim that "The study of the art and history of medieval England was carried on mainly in non-academic settings".

He refers to "eccentric upper-class Augustan amateurs such as Horace Walpole, Batty Langley, and Sanderson Miller", whereas the social

misinterpret the aims of a body as central to his story as the Ecclesiologist Society. He does this in the course of his account of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Cambridge. The "restoration" by Salvin and the ecclesiologists in 1841 of this celebrated Norman church involved the reconstruction of the tower. Referring to the church incomprehensibly as "St. Sophia", Dellheim describes its restorers' aim as to "recreate the church in the Perpendicular style they favoured". The opposite was, of course, the case.

The apparent unfamiliarity with the period is further suggested by the annotated bibliography, which not only has some astonishing lacunae such as Pevsner's *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* and M. H. P. P. *The Houses of Parliament*, but also claims that "There is no comparative analysis of European medievalism: in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", while omitting Frank's monumental survey, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton 1960). It seems that Dellheim, an Associate Professor of History at Arizona State University, has been urged to rush into print as soon as possible and reflection has been a scholar who is able to make a more helpful contribution to the rich topic he has chosen.

These are, admittedly, points for debate. But it is difficult to debate them when the author can totally

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## commentary

## Scheveningen revisited

Harley Preston

The Hague School - Dutch Masters of the 19th Century  
Royal Academy

There remains a continuing fascination in the present era with the endless riches of Western art of the last century from which more and more tarnished treasure is dredged up, polished and displayed for admiration. The Barbizon School, for example, has been adequately re-evaluated to something of its true status in a period of slightly less than the past quarter century. Whether or not we are to see the Royal Academy exhibition *The Hague School - Dutch Masters of the 19th Century* as a "Scheveningen Revisited", an equivalent in kind of Robert Herbert's seminal Barbizon show of 1962, there is no doubt that in terms of an ever-developing and modifying taste, it was inevitable it should happen.

The well-springs of the Hague School lay in the art of Corot, Rousseau, Millet, Jacque, Dupré, Diaz and Troyon, and a little later, in Lhermitte, Breton and Bastien-Lepage. Courbet offered a challenge, Rosa Bonheur a stimulus. The informing presence of Charles-François Daubigny is apparent not only in the quiet and limpid canal scenes of Jacob Maris, even in Israel's "Sandbarge", but also in the painterly handling of Mesdag's "The Return of the Lifeboat" and "Sunset". In the latter is seen also the influence of Courbet's visions of the Immenity of sea and sky, Millet and Rousseau imbue William Roelofs's "The Rainbow", indeed his more intimate studies "The Hovel" and "Beaufort" presuppose the exemplar of the grand *refuge*.

Millet and Jacque seem to lie behind one of the great pictures in the show, Anton Mauve's "The Return of the Flock" (from Philadelphia) with its brittle and crackling blackness studded with gently luminous sheep. The bold

## Snubbing the snobs

Lindsay Duguid

Denise Degan  
Daisy Pulls It Off  
Globe Theatre

*Daisy Pulls It Off* is a bit of a joke. It tells the story of Daisy Meredith, an Elementary School pupil on a scholarship to the famous Grangewood School, who wins through against heavy odds. From the moment we see the panelled halls and ivy-clad stone of Grangewood, the play's inventive

revolving set and hear the first notes of "Rule Britannia" thumped out on a slightly out-of-tune piano, we are in no doubt but that she will succeed. There are, however, many obstacles to overcome: snobbish Sybil Burlington, whose parents are frightfully rich, and the school toady Monica Smithers set themselves against her; the enigmatic music master Mr Scoblowksi threatens her; tall characters introduce themselves with a Homeric tag, from the firm but fair form mistress downwards; and the entire Second Form sends her to Coventry. Daisy, who is excellently played by Alexandra Mathie, is upheld in her trials by her sense of fair play, her admiration for Clare Beaumont, glamorous head-girl and hockey captain, but most of all by her chum Tristie Martin (madcap and poet - beautifully acted by Helena Little).

The play is not an out-and-out parody but is a homage to the school story of the 1930s as exemplified by Angela Brazil and Elinor M. Brent Dyer and as such it can hardly be faulted. Denise Degan shows great confidence in her exploration of the genre. In addition to a dialogue punctuated by "crazy" and "golly" and rarer examples of period slang the

emptiness of "The Marsh" suggests some of the more austere and daring oil sketches of Rousseau and Daubigny, although in his famous painting "Riders on the Beach at Scheveningen" Mauve conjures up, by contrast, a scene of everyday life with *décor*-like immediacy and a tonality of higher key. A side glance at German painting is at times in evidence, and the more mysterious, unyielding art of the somewhat equivocal Matthias Maris shows an awareness of the English illustrators and the Pre-Raphaelite succession as if viewed through the monochrome of the reproductive engraving.

Much more could be said here, but to play games of "spot the influence" is not ultimately rewarding. The works on view speak unmistakably with the accents of their particular time and place, and have their own moods and quiet homely poetry of understated sentiment. Despite the protests of some artists, this is in its earlier phases at least a "grey school" with a glorification of greys which may be those of charred stubble as in Mauve's open, twilight fields or the pearliness of his "Fishing Boat on the Beach at Scheveningen" and his deeper-toned "A Dutch Road", or of Jacob Maris's sonorous "Allotments near the Hague". In the latter's "Beached Fishing Boat" from the Hague Gemeentemuseum, the greys burn with a dazzling, platinum radiance. Indeed, many paintings have a metallic lustre, now golden, now leaden, now coppery, now purest silver. "Dutch Impressionists" is a misnomer - there is little of French Impressionism here and its instantaneous fix of transient light and colour caught in a web of small brush strokes of broken pigment.

The Hague School taps an earlier phase of naturalism. In its landscapes, as of French Realism with occasional overtones of Courbet, the assertiveness of whose brushwork invades even the placid compositions of the Maris brothers, although it is the softer domestic realism of Bonvin which runs more nearly parallel with that of some figure subjects - even von Gogh's. Light is unquestionably a central

whole play is a paradigm of a certain kind of novel. It is structured in chapter form. Paragraphs of high-flow description ("Daisy gazed at the rambling red-brick Elizabethan mansion lit by the setting sun...") and brief directions ("Daisy pealed"). The corners of Clare's mouth twitched. "They collapsed" are spoken, and sometimes acted, as asides. More importantly Miss Degan has managed to encapsulate an entire ethos ("For Grangewood - for England") and a vanished culture (an essay topic is "Summarize the Causes of England's Greatness"), the subjects for the poetry competition are "Heroes" or "The Meditations of a Lighthouse".

The plot is a masterpiece of complication with hidden treasure, long-lost udders, Boishevik plots and wrongful accusations. The apothecary of Daisy comes after she has scored the winning goal in a vital hockey match, saved Sybil and Monica's lives in a (deviously staged) cliff-top rescue, cleared her name, found the treasure and her father (presumed dead before the play begins) and nearly died of brain fever in the space of twenty-four hours. It is only right that the hockey match, which forms the emotional high-point of the play, is the most exciting of these events.

To anyone who can pick up the literary allusions it is all very amusing but the point of the school story is that it is a morale tale: Daisy's vindication is the real triumph. A lot of fun is had with the more burlesque aspects but no one exits without at least a flop, a turn and a run) and the script merits gentler treatment. The audience is asked both to laugh at the gaudiness on stage and to sympathize with Daisy in her fight against snobs, sneaks and cowards. In the end it has no hesitation in cheering the ripples: girl in the school.

preoccupation, but it is often the light of a cold, white, supersaturated glow.

The palette and tonalities eventually warm up, particularly in the relatively long sequence of paintings by Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch which reveal a notable range and variety of style - a distinct discovery of the exhibition. Here an almost Biedermeier eye develops in vision to the blood luminosity of the "Beach Scene" of 1887, perhaps with a hint of Manet, even Degas, certainly of Jongkind, and on to the dashing breadth of the near-grayscale "Beach Scene" of 1901, faintly reminiscent of the late Vollon. This new naturalistic School, in the parochial Dutch context a "modern" one, broke finally with the seventeenth-century categories of expression - hardly a still life to be seen - but the benevolent shades of the Golden Age linger, and not merely in the objectively compassionate peasant and celebrations of age (as in the moving "Growing Old" of Josef Israëls). Here a warm, Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro is allied to thick and fearless brushwork to sum up something of the integrity and honesty of the entire group.

There is in the art of Israel an air of detachment which just holds back from the brink of sentimentality, and the very broad and sketch-like "Meditation" (almost an introspective peacemaker and celebrations of age) is in the moving "Growing Old" of Josef Israëls. Here a warm, Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro is allied to thick and fearless brushwork to sum up something of the integrity and honesty of the entire group.

Perhaps the purist might quibble with the inclusion of the more universally prestigious names of van Gogh and Mondrian. With a little stretching and some appropriate documentation the exhibition can be made as comfortable as the van Gogh familiar mainly to the itinerant researcher (or the peruser of de la Fallice) and the dramatically "pre-Mondrian" Mondrian.

The catalogue (336pp. The Royal Academy of Arts, £5.50, 0 297 78069 7) is shiny and fashionably massive, meticulously documented, profusely illustrated with additional pictures and thorough to the point of extending in various directions of its subject. The essays are largely the work of Ronald de Leeuw and Jan Sillevis, with contributions from Hans Kraan, Charles Dumas, Charles Mott and Herbert Henkels; the bibliographies are most valuable.

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## commentary

## Annotations of Worktown

Frances Spalding

British International Association  
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford

"Bringing art to the people", wrote Engels and Engels' Caricature, "is in its best tradition of British culture." Engels was the most influential spokesman with the Artists International Association where he fostered the notion that art is a form of social consciousness, and that as long as there are different classes, no single set of aesthetic values will prevail. The current exhibition, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the AIA, which is the work of Sunday painters mingling with that of professional artists, designers and illustrators. The binding principle is not any standard of aesthetic unity or style in politics. Realism, of course, was the style best suited to the proletarian cause. To bring out this point, work by Gill, Grant, Moore, Henry Moore, Eric Gill, Paul Nash, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, among others, agreed to sit on its advisory council and the exhibition "Artists Against Fascism and War" was mounted. A baffling range of styles was now tolerated, abstract art mingling with Surrealism, academicism and photographs of working-class life.

Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, the organizers of the show at Oxford, respect this diversity, but their selection is nevertheless slanted towards realism, the style the AIA did much to promote. The large-scale works verge on agit-prop, while the small oils, prints and drawings affirm the slogan "conservative in art and radical in politics". Realism, of course, was the style best suited to the proletarian cause. To bring out this point, work by Gill, Grant, Moore, Henry Moore, Eric Gill, Paul Nash, Vanessa Bell and other well-known painters is omitted to make space for working-class subjects by little-known painters. Worker-artists, such as the coal-miners' Ashington Group, were encouraged because their experience of industry was felt to bring more realism to a subject than anything professional training could supply. Nevertheless a gap remained. The bohemian, often Hampstead-based artists did not always mix comfortably with their working-class colleagues;

## After the Battle of Little Sparta

Michael Schmidt

One of the vital traces of "high culture" is Scotland and the neo-classical garden and garden temple of the poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. It is called Little Sparta and it spreads itself over the side of a mountain in Lanarkshire, civilizing the landscape in the landscape's own time by identifying and framing in images famous vistas from Claude and Poussin; there are almost literally "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones", and everywhere connections re-established between artifacts and the world from which they are drawn. Any of the thousands of visitors who have passed that way will confirm that Little Sparta is the temple, and by the time you reach it you are spiritually prepared for higher transformations effected there in and on various media: glass, stone, paper, ceramics, neon, wood, metal. The craftsmanship of all the revolutionary articles - most of them

The history is tortuous and complex, but in a nutshell it is this. Some years ago, Strathclyde Region withdrew ratepayers' rate relief from the temple because, it was argued, Little Sparta was "unknown" and received no grant from the Scottish Arts Council. The temple was described as a "commercial art gallery" and the rates were set at over £500, while the house in which the poet lives nearby was rated - including rebates on account of his poverty - at 47p. Mr Finlay requested mandatorily relief on the grounds that the building was a garden temple in the long, well-documented tradition of neo-classical garden temples in Britain and abroad. A number of experts - British, European and American - supported his case. The Region refused to consider his application - indeed, refused all discussion. Without what reasonably might be called "due process", they asked for a warrant sale - a compulsory sale of works to recover the rates demanded - last summer. When Mr Finlay discovered that it was void to pursue discussion, he arranged for many buyers from all over the world to be present on the day. He assumed that after such a sale, the debt cleared, the discussion might take place. The discussion was cancelled by the Region at the last moment. When the Region was "re-activated", Mr Finlay again sought discussion and was again denied. The Region made it clear that there could be an annual warrant sale and refused to discuss the case as it was "in perpetuity". The re-activated sale was to take place on February 4. Mr Finlay staged his now famous "Battle of Little Sparta" with tanks, cavalry, mine-fields, hide-outs, traps,

and when Coldstream and Graham Bell joined Bolton, in connection with Tom Harrison's "Worktown" project, they did so from the rooftops. Moreover Coldstream's unpeopled streets reminded one resident, whose opinion was sought, of the two-minute silence on Armistice Day.

If for some "Subject" became merely an exercise in observation, with others its point was hammered home. The talented, Slade-trained Clive Branson adopted the earnest literalism of a naive painter to portray subjects like "Selling the Daily Worker outside Projectile Engineering Works". The caricaturists James Boswell and James Fitton exposed hypocrisy and class mores in their illustrations for the *Left Review*, while others turned their propaganda skills to the making of posters and banners to raise funds for Spain. During the Second World War commissions from the War Artists' Advisory Committee gave certain AIA members further opportunity to record industrial effort. Salvo did not die, but subject matter became more parochial. Edward Ardizzone's "The War in Malda Vale" finds business as usual, save that the pub regulars are now in uniform.

It was the vicissitudes brought by peace, rather than by war, that weakened the AIA. Anxiety over Soviet intentions in Eastern Europe troubled it from 1947 until 1953 when the political clause in its Constitution was deleted. Though it continued as an artists' organization until 1971, its best years were over. The book, published

against whom the mere citizen has no redress because he is not allowed communication, adds ideology to law, confiscates parts of works (not the artist's) to five times the value of the ones demand, refuses to return them when the actual ownership is made clear, leaves Christie's holding the can. When I rang the Sheriff Officer, he suggested that Mr Finlay ought to employ a solicitor for his dealings with the Region. I pointed out that there were not the resources for this and lamented that only the wealthy could, under such circumstances, ensure fair treatment under the law from the Region. He audibly shrugged.

Where were the competent authorities? The Scottish Arts Council tried in its own mild way to help, but failed to make public its experiences which, were I an arts admin man, I would have found intolerable, even from local government. When they first met the Region, they asked if Mr Finlay could be represented. The Region refused. At the meeting, the Region did not tell the SAC director about Mr Finlay's application for mandatory relief. In subsequent correspondence compounding this dishonesty, denying that Mr Finlay had asked for discussion, Mr Finlay felt that he had refused it. The SAC director's own view of the garden temple differs from the Region's. But the SAC has made no public comment on the Budget Day Raid, on the closing of the garden and temple or on the consequences of the Region's action. By its silence on these matters it disregards issues of - quite simply - human rights: the right of direct discussion with elected officials and public servants, the right not to be robbed, and so forth. It becomes part of that inbuilt institutional hostility to anything not irreducibly secular in nature. To put it another way: does the SAC endorse the destruction of Little Sparta and the life's work of one of Scotland's leading poets? If not, why has it not spoken out? Mr Finlay asked. The SAC to state "whether you believe that the Arts are in any way related to notions of legality, justice, integrity, fact, truth, honour, aspiration, the spirit? In seriousness, or as a game?" The question should also be put to the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State, Scottish artists and writers. Answers are invited, and action?

to its title and now stood for "Unity of artists against Fascism and War and the suppression of culture". This generalized aim, combined with the particular historical moment, attracted even the most apolitical. That year Dame Laura Knight, Augustus John, Henry Moore, Eric Gill, Paul Nash, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, among others, agreed to sit on its advisory council and the exhibition "Artists Against Fascism and War" was mounted. A baffling range of styles was now tolerated, abstract art mingling with Surrealism, academicism and photographs of working-class life.

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What do these curious events reveal? First, that Strathclyde Region is clearly in important respects beyond the authority of the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council. All have declared themselves in letters or public statements as incompetent to deal with this matter internal to what must appear to be the "Stalinist" - the Scotsman's expression - Republic of Strathclyde. Mr Finlay's call for the intervention of UN Troops is not at all odd - in these circumstances - as if sounds A Region, answerable to no one, subject to no higher authority

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This study analyses the various approaches to government intervention in the field of environment control, and presents the findings of an empirical project designed to examine the implementation of one such control instrument, in the water industry.

## Labour Law and Industrial Relations

Building on Kahn-Freund  
Edited by  
Lord Wedderburn,  
Roy Lewis, and Jon Clark

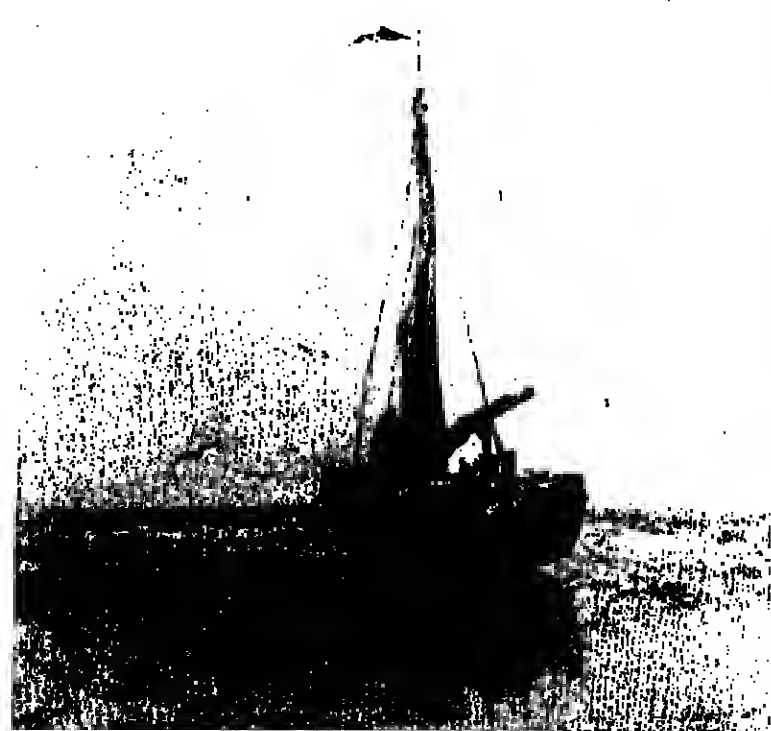
This place of law in industrial relations is of central importance to contemporary society. Otto Kahn-Freund (1900-1979) was the leading scholar in the field. This book explains his seminal contribution to the subject and seeks to build upon his methods and his analysis. £16 paperback £8.95

## Principles of Scottish Private Law

David Walker

This third volume examines the rights and duties which attach to parties in relation to property of every kind, including dealings, affecting property and rights in equity. In this new edition the text has been extensively revised particularly to take account of the introduction of land registration and other developments. Third edition Volume III £30

Oxford  
University Press



Jacob Maris's "Fishing Boat" (1878) from the exhibition reviewed here.

## Poetical roughage

Peter Kemp

Edible Gold  
Channel 4

*Edible Gold* is that television rarity, a programme that holds a steady focus on literature. Designed to allow poetry to speak for itself, it transmits texts with unusual straightforwardness. Never more than a few minutes long, each programme consists of the reading of a poem or short poems. The format is carefully uncluttered - no "atmospheric" visuals to pull the eye in a different direction from the ear, no reciting "personality" to intrude between the poem and its audience. Never seen, the readers are not even named; the only thing on view - apart from the author's name and dates - is the text of the poem being read. Kept austere, the presentation complements and complements the poetry in assuming that it will supply the necessary richness itself.

Despite a title implying that it will be giving the viewer something valuable to chew over, *Edible Gold* hasn't always shown sterling taste in its selections. The opening piece, for instance, was surprisingly recent - Basil Bunting's "What the Chairman told Tom". This heavy send-up of the philistine response to poetry - "I want to wash when I meet a poet... What you write is rot" - was presumably chosen to advertise the worth of *Edible Gold*'s subject-matter, but, with its thick veil of crudity, was hardly a valuable sample. Later pieces, fortunately, have shown writers more on their mettle. The great majority of poems chosen, it is noticeable, are ones in which the spoken voice is of importance, tone and even accent of considerable significance. Disappointingly though, while the poems encompass a range of vocal styles, the readers don't. In keeping, perhaps, with the programme's commitment to unobtrusiveness, an almost exaggeratedly neutral manner is maintained, with voices only occasionally rising to some wry half-stress or dropping in a somewhat weary cadence. It's a delivery most appropriate to the kind of poetry *Edible Gold* has displayed a penchant for - that of the 1930s. Two of the first twelve programmes have offered readings from MacNeice, and here the male reader has seemed in his element. His slightly nasal voice, with its rather thin, faintly cracked sound, reminiscent of a 1930s overseaser, proved ideally attuned to the low-keyed, lugubrious lines from *Autumn*

Poems and voices haven't always synchronized in these programmes: not have the shorter poems been as interestingly linked as they might. Opportunities for comparison and contrast have been almost sedulously neglected. Dorothy Parker's "One Perfect Rose" was put pointlessly alongside Michael Drayton's "Since There's No Help" - though it would have made a neat ironic coupling with Waller's "Go, Lovely Rose" (also in the series, irrelevantly accompanied by Elizabeth Wordsworth's "Good and Clever"). Lewis Carroll's "Father William", merrily partnered by a poem of Emily Dickinson's, might, instead, have been illuminatingly paired with the poem it parodies, Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts". As with other Channel 4 innovations in approaching literature - *Voices of Shakespeare Lives!* - the potential of an admirable conception hasn't yet been fully realized. With just a bit more working on the poetics of *Edible Gold* scattered through Channel 4's schedules could give unalloyed pleasure.

APRIL 1983



# Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

Thanks to the impersonations of Barry Humphries, a visit to Australia House to meet the Literature Director of the Australia Council conjured up all sorts of wild colonial imaginings. And though the interview did indeed take place in the Bruce Rooms, Michael Costigan proved to be no brass-breathed, toothy, beer-stained boor, but a thin, wire-bespectacled former priest. "I don't think Barry Humphries has done justice to his fellow Australians", Costigan remarked, adding in somewhat rueful tones that Humphries had once had a grant from the Australia Council to write a book, but that so far the volume has not been forthcoming.

Any lingering temptation to patronize Australia's patronage of letters should be dispelled by the discovery that Australian writers have been in a position to receive pensions since 1908, and that grants to writers were first made in 1939. Currently 6 per cent of the Australia Council's budget, about £1.3 million, is spent on literature, and 60 per cent of that goes on direct grants to writers.

Michael Costigan passes no comment on the contrast between Britain's and Australia's support for the written word, nor on the irony that the Arts Council's Literature Director is also an Australian. "I see Australia's literature as closer to that of Canada, Scotland or Wales, fighting to preserve a national identity while bookshops are flooded with British and American productions." The job of convincing people that Australian literature does exist had brought Costigan on a tour of Europe and America.

Costigan became Director of the Australian Literature Board in 1973, when the Whitlam government undertook a massive reconstruction and expansion of the country's arts funding. Australian Literature is now a recognized course subject in forty-nine European universities. Later this year an Australian Studies Centre will be opened officially in Russell Square.

But what are the distinctive themes of Australian writing? The tradition of the bush ballad end the outback dates from the nineteenth century, "but Australia in the 1980s is the most urbanized country in the world, and a lot of our contemporary writers are concerned with the urban experience, rather than the bush". The Republican movement, which is now being taken very seriously, has its roots in the Irish contribution to the Australian mix. Similarly there is an Irish background to current preoccupations with attitudes to Roman Catholicism. Australian writers have found fresh subject matter in the Asian countries of Australia. Australia's participation in the Vietnam war was an important moment in the country's culture, and did much to stimulate the exploration

of national identity which it is the job of the Literature Board to promote.

The theme of expatriation inevitably runs in the literature, but more recently Australian writers who went abroad, like Peter Porter or Christina Stead, have now begun to return, either imaginatively, or physically for longer periods. Some indeed no longer feel the need to go away. The Literature Board's steady support for living writers may have something to do with this. "Many of our leading writers have been supported almost continuously over the past few years - except Patrick White, and he used his Nobel Prize money to help support Australian writers." The success of Thomas Kenenally can be traced to Literature Board support, but there are others: Peter Carey, David Malouf, David Ireland, Roger McDonald, Christopher Kosh, Helen Garner, Barbara Hanrohan and Blanche d'Alpuget among them, who have found publishers in London or New York. Some 700 writers have received support in recent years, and writers abroad are helped as well as those at home.

Although the possession of a common tongue with Britain and America has its advantages as well as disadvantages, Michael Costigan says that he does not take the view that

"Australian Literature is written in any particular language. Turkish, Polish, Greek and Spanish writing has also been helped." The position of Aboriginal writing is complicated by the existence of an Aboriginal Arts Board, but the government's commitment to "multiculturalism" means that there is support for writers such as Colin Johnson, Kath Walker, Jack Davis and Kevin Gilbert.

Australians are keenly interested in their writers. It is said that they buy more books per capita than any other country, and currently they are buying more Australian books. This is in spite of a good public library system. (Australia has had Public Lending Right for several years). The new Labour government has been elected on a pledge to increase spending on the arts. Michael Costigan is not sure how much that will turn out to be, but "I'm sure we're secure." It makes our own literary patronage feel decidedly small.

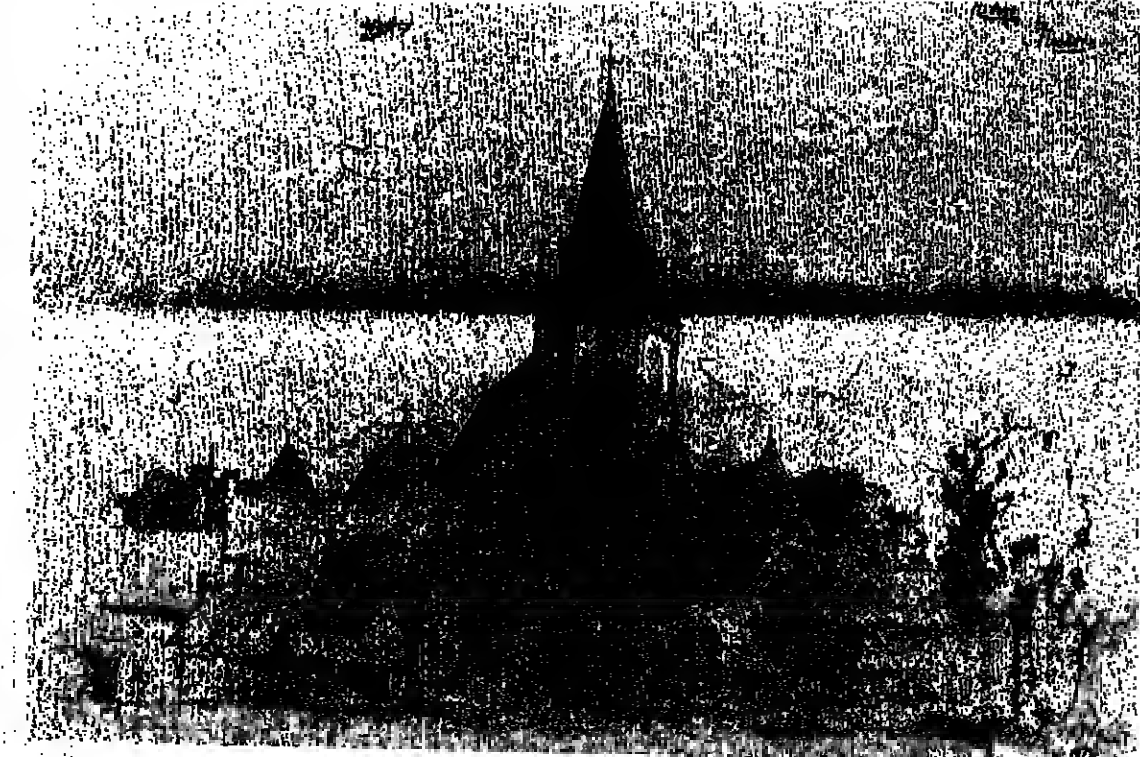
If British publishers with subsidiary companies in Australia are viewed there as cultural imperialists, their image with professional translators here is that of extreme cultural chauvinists. In 1982 British publishers produced a record number of titles, 48,307, but of these only 1,391 were translations, and of those a mere 178

were works of fiction. The steady decline in the number of translations published has not surprisingly alarmed the Translators' Association, which celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year.

The Translators' Association should not be confused with the Translators' Guild, which conducts exams through the Institute of Linguistics, and is mainly occupied with scientific, commercial, legal and other forms of technical translation. The Translators' Association is concerned with "literary translation", and is in fact a subsidiary group within the Society of Authors.

Michael Glenny, the Association's chairman, is emphatic about the unacknowledged creativity of translators. "The translator is the exact analogue of the virtuoso interpretative musician. People do not realize that the book they are reading was written by the translator."

The unfair anonymity of the translator (undarined by the reluctance of publishers to feature the translator's name on jackets or in publicity) had led to a certain anonymity about the Translators' Association itself, which has some 220 members, perhaps a third of the number of regular literary translators. Michael Glenny, however, is determined to alter that, and he is launching



At this time of controversy, a work incontestably from Hitler's hand: a drawing of Ardoye in Flanders, made in 1917, included in a special edition of reproductions of his pictures published in Germany in 1935. It can now be seen in the exhibition reviewed below.

## On the Track of Tyranny

Historians engaged in the study of Nazi criminality are akin to workers in forensic medicine: the horrors are unavoidable part of the job, the required attitude a detachment by which ordinary human feelings are kept tidily separate. A sense of a determinedly objective approach in the face of outrageous evil is conveyed by *On the Track of Tyranny* 1933-1983: *Fascism, Nazism and after*, the recently opened exhibition marking the fiftieth anniversary of London's Wiener Library (4 Devonshire Street, W1), which presents, through a selection of photographs, posters, books, newspaper cuttings and other materials from the Library's archives, a microcosm of this terrible phase of German and European history. Yet, sensationalist though it is in its approach, there is no doubting the strength of moral commitment that informs the exhibition, as it has for many years the work of the fine historian who is director of the Library as well as of the Institute of Contemporary History, Walter Laqueur.

A reception in honour of Thomas Mann was held at the Wiener Library on May 18, 1949: Mann, in paying tribute to the Library, described its

archives as constituting a "testimony to a degradation of man such as had not occurred at any time in the history of civilization.... It is one of the most impressive monuments of those days of horror which it was our dreadful lot to witness." Mann's visit to the Library is described in a special exhibition issue of the Wiener Library Bulletin, which also contains an article by Lord Bullock, "Is it Possible to Write Contemporary History?", an account of how the German-Jewish refugee Alfred Wiener founded the Library, and studies of antisemitism in England and Romania.

The second annual Translation Prize competition has recently been announced by the British Comparative Literature Association. First and second prizes of £100 and £50 are offered for English translations of poetry, fiction, drama or literary prose from any language, entries (maximum 25 pages of typescript) to be submitted by October 1. The judges will be Daniel Weissbort, Peter France, Elinor Shaffer and Arthur Terry. Further details may be had from Professor Terry, Department of Literature, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ.

Competition No 120 Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than May 27. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 120" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 3.

1 PS - To-morrow night I am going to see *Otello*, an opera from our *Otello*, and one of Rossini's best, it is said. It will be curious to see in Venice the Venetian story itself represented, besides to discover what they will make of Shakespeare in music.

2 I talked of Music's gorgeous fane; I loved about Rossini. Hoped Ronzi would come back again. And criticized Pacini.

3 Toorlolo, toorlolo, toorlolo, loo - Fiddleliddle, diddle diddle di; *Figaro* *Figaro* *Figaro* -

a recruiting drive in the universities this autumn, offering student membership.

Glenny's other target is the publishers. Since the Copyright Act of 1961 translators have been entitled to retain their rights (including a royalty) in a translation, but too often publishers neglect to inform them of this. The Association has accordingly produced its own standard contract, similar to the Minimum Terms Agreement being pressed by the Authors' Guild and the Society of Authors. A survey of its membership shows that translators average about £20 per 1,000 words, with some weighting for the rarity of the language. The Association is fighting to establish a minimum going rate of £25 per 1,000. Although the demand for literary translation appears to be declining, the economics of translation are such that those who would live by their peculiar skill (and few, Michael Glenny among them, attempt to do so) must always work too fast. "You are treated like a machine, but no more technician could do this work."

The Translators' Association has a hard row to hoe. "Anglo-Saxon literary culture is quite extremely resistant to literature in other languages; partially because of its own success, it can think itself self-sufficient. Whereas other countries, Holland for instance, rely economically on translation to keep themselves culturally afloat. Consequently translators have much higher status in Scandinavia, West Germany or Spain. My agent once said to me 'You're in the wrong job, in the wrong culture, at the wrong time - if it's money you're after.' And yet the English language has always needed translators to give it vitality. There were, for instance, the translators of the King James Bible. I doubt, however, that they would have dared to insist on £25 per thousand words."

In the meantime, the 1983 literary festival season is under way, with the Cambridge Poetry Festival and Writing '83 at Lancaster already past. The Oxford Poetry Festival follows, from May 7 to 15, and then there is a full unit in newcomer appears on August 20, the Edinburgh Book Festival, a fresh feature of the International Festival. October is at over-crowded as a reminder, bookshop's bookshelves: Brecknell from 7 to 9, Cheltenham from 9 to 16, Kent 19 to 22, and Newcastle from 21 to 30. Birmingham Readers and Writers celebrate from 9 to 20 November, and Essex is announced for May 1 to 12, 1984. The literary festival may have their own. Feels had from Pamela Chuter-Ross at the Poetry Society, 21 Earls Court Square, London SW5.

There are further problems, particularly with volumes I and II containing the poetry and the prose. In the prose volume, Alan Price, faced with the enormous editorial problems posed by Sygne's MSS, abandoned any attempt to present variant readings of the autobiographical writings, and provided conflated texts constructed from material found in various places. He described his texts as "acceptable", but anyone who has worked with the MSS will, I am afraid, dispute this. There are, for example, six distinct versions of Sygne's autobiography read throughout TCD MSS 4382, 4383 and 4362. Price's conflation of these texts may provide a single reading text, but it fails, by the standards of modern textual scholarship, to do justice to his sources. OUP were apprised of these problems by early reviewers and by scholars, and Price himself provided a different text, constructed in another way, for the Dorian Press. The *Autobiography of J. M. Synge* in 1965. It is certainly important to have Sygne's prose in print, but the new version about the accuracy of the texts, repeat the claims made for the volume by OUP in 1965; these include the remark that "assemblies all Sygne's prose writings of any merit or interest" which, made in 1982, makes recent Sygne's attempt to improve the MSS a cance - eg, in *Hormithena* CXX (1976), look somewhat pointless. And a further problem arises from the present publisher's decision to omit the original plates on page 97 of the second volume, Price, defending and justifying his extensive editorial activity, refers the reader to a facsimile of one of the MSS "between pp. 40-41", where the problems can be seen. But in this Colin Synge edition, there is no facsimile. What is one to make of that?

Robie Skelton's editorial procedure in the first volume is also, as your reviewer notes, open to question. He chose to exclude several poems of considerable interest, in TCD MSS 4364, 4371 and 4372, on the grounds that they were not of sufficient poetic merit. We most respect Skelton's judgment, of course, but the volume he

produced would be more accurately titled "Selected" than "Collected" poems.

Oddly enough, alterations have been permitted in volumes III and IV, the plays, which were the work of Ann Saddlemyer. For instance, pages 181-2 of volume III have been completely reset to allow for an entirely new translation of a passage from German, and there are other minor alterations - though the introductions and references are unaltered. But this inclusion of some changes in some volumes merely makes the whole exercise more confusing: two volumes are untouched, two are slightly corrected, and nowhere is the reader adequately alerted to these inconsistencies or the fact that these are re-issued and not "new" volumes.

Anyone interested in Irish studies knows and admires the books published by Colin Smythe, and it is unfortunate that his attempt to keep the works of Synge in print should lead to confusion. But since these volumes have appeared without either adequate revision or adequate explanation of their status, the general reader is likely to be puzzled by them and any scholar who hopes to use them as the basis for research is in danger of being seriously misled.

ANDREW CARPENTER.

Department of English, University College, Dublin 4.

## J. M. Synge

Sir - Your reviewer, John Elsom, has been misled - perhaps by the publisher's blurb on the back covers of the *Collected Works of J. M. Synge* - into thinking that the edition he reviewed (March 25) is a new one containing previously unpublished Synge material. This is quite incorrect. What Colin Smythe has done is to produce a new edition of the four-volume *Collected Works* issued by Oxford University Press between 1962 and 1968. It is not, perhaps, surprising that your reviewer, misled as the blurb on two of the four new volumes makes no references to the earlier publication, and, indeed, of the wording of this blurb, with a claim of "recently discovered manuscript material", was written for the OUP edition of the 1960s; it was all quite true then, but it is sadly out of date now, and it is hard to defend the release of these volumes without adequate explanation of their status.

The most important effects of the publication of the OUP edition of 1968 were the stimulation of Synge scholarship and an awakening of interest in the Synge MSS. These manuscripts were deposited in the library of Trinity College Dublin in 1968, and re-numbered then. Not only to these re-issued volumes make no reference to the Synge scholarship of the past twenty years, but, far more seriously, all their references to the MSS are fifteen years out of date. My agent once said to me 'You're in the wrong job, in the wrong culture, at the wrong time - if it's money you're after.' And yet the English language has always needed translators to give it vitality. There were, for instance, the translators of the King James Bible. I doubt, however, that they would have dared to insist on £25 per thousand words."

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ANDREW CARPENTER.

Department of English, University College, Dublin 4.

## The Lebanese War

Sir - Michael Howard was certainly right in anticipating critical reactions to his review of Michael Jansen's and Jacobo Timerman's books on the Lebanese war (April 15).

To start with, he is ill at ease with facts. For instance, he writes that "there were certainly some 12,000 PLO fighters in the Lebanon" in fact, there were at least twice that number. After the fighting ceased, 12,000 PLO fighters were evacuated from Beirut, but, in addition, over 5,000 were captured by the Israelis and sent to various camps, and quite a few thousand died in the fighting.

Professor Howard also claims that "Tyre, Sidon and Beirut were destroyed precisely in order to spare the sensibilities of Timerman and his friends". In fact, none of these cities was destroyed, as anybody who has visited them recently can testify. All that happened was that some of their districts suffered considerable damage. In the course of the fighting.

A reviewer who takes such liberties with verifiable facts should not be surprised if his rather partisan comments are not taken too seriously.

LIONEL BLOCH.

9 Wimpole Street, London W1.

**Dictionaries and Trade Marks**

Sir - As the author of a *Dictionary of Trade Name Origins* I was delighted to see Neville March Hunning's (Letters, April 15) make a stand against the insidious EEC draft directive on trade marks.

When compiling material for my book, I was constantly beset by trademark agents, publicity managers, and other legal advisers constraining me to define a trade name, and comment on its usage, in terms that they sought to approve, rather than in the actual free field of usage that controls all words in the English language. We are names, of artificial origin, many of which are subject to no restriction in our use of such invented words or "blurb" (allegedly by Paracelsus), or who is the man who pretends to tell me how I may or may not use "Hoover" say, or "Korcula"? If my favourite aunt really told me that she's "bought a really nice, hoover, an Electrolux", what fearful legal "solecism" is she committing?

The short answer is, in fact, none whatsoever, since as I take pains to point out in the introduction to my book, the owners of a registered trademark are not entitled to prevent others from using the word in its ordinary sense. Nor can I understand why the proprietors of trade marks feel threatened and seek to resort to legal protection. Is not the Hoover Company battered when its notably excellent product so dominates the market that its name becomes the generic term? As for sales: if I walk into a showroom and ask, however vaguely, to see the latest range of Hoovers, the assistant will presumably show me precisely machines bearing that

name have no right to prevent us, the members of the public, from using their names, or misusing them, in any way we choose. The editor of a dictionary, however, is of course in a particularly responsible position, and will certainly not wish to misuse or misrepresent a trade name any more than any other name or noun. His duty is to define and illustrate a word in the way in which it is commonly used and understood, and neither the EEC Commissioners nor anyone else has a right to prevent him from doing so.

ADRIAN ROOM.

173 The Causeway, Petersfield, Hampshire.

Sir - Neville March Hunning's (Letters, April 15) wrote to *The Times* in June 1981 in very similar terms. David O. Lewis, Chairman, Trade Marks Committee, at Centre Point replied that "he had little to fear" because the draft EEC legislation is "all bark and no bite". Obviously Mr Hunning remains unconvinced and he is right to be sceptical.

I wrote an article about the matter, stressing that, because of the conflicting interests involved, the legislators must consult lexicographers and not just the owners of trademark. My article was published by *The Times* (June 25, 1981).

With the help of Sir Henry Plumb MEP, I tracked down the particular group of civil servants in Brussels who are preparing the legislation. I offered to go to Brussels and see the appropriate Director, J.-L. Cadieux, Commission of the European Communities, Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels. He delegated the matter to Mr Bryan Harris, Head of Division "Intellectual Property" of DG III. Mr Harris was to come and see me. He has not, despite being reminded.

Does Mr Hunning understand the ways of bureaucrats? If so, will he please take over where I left off and pursue the matter to the Rue de la Loi? The danger that "noxious provisions" will be made part of EEC law is disturbing to all lexicographers and unwilling to consult the great dictionary houses of member countries, but to the best of my knowledge they have not done so, and the draft legislation, even at the rate at which EEC commissioners work, must soon reach the point of enactment.

ROBERT BURCHFIELD.

Oxford University Press, 37a St Giles', Oxford.

Sir, May I, as a practising lexicographer (English/Spanish), support in the warmest terms Neville March Hunning's plea (Letters, April 15): "On all linguistic grounds, he is surely right. I have not myself seen the new EEC directive, but presumably my publishers have, and they would of course insist on my obeying the law (in other existing works in their bilingual series, trade marks are already respected)."

As Mr Hunning says, no law, cut stop, a trade mark, is a word or words which are used by one person or persons for the purpose of distinguishing their goods or services from those of other persons. But the process can go further when generic verbs are created: "We are having our house snowed", "Please roneo me fifty copies", "I will have it xeroxed for you", and commonest of all, "I was hoovering the floor". Presumably the well-known advertising catchphrase "Have you Macleaned your teeth today?" could, with a little pushing, produce the verb, to maclean, in a more general application. One wonders whether the original Mr Maclean ever began to say and write "maclean", and then mac, as generic terms.

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Does Mr Hunning understand the ways of bureaucrats? If so, will he please take over where I left off and pursue the matter to the Rue de la Loi? The danger that "noxious provisions" will be made part of EEC law is disturbing to all lexicographers and unwilling to consult the great dictionary houses of member countries, but to the best of my knowledge they have not done so, and the draft legislation, even at the rate at which EEC commissioners work, must soon reach the point of enactment.

ROBERT BURCHFIELD.

Oxford University Press, 37a St Giles', Oxford.

Sir, May I, as a practising lexicographer (English/Spanish), support in the warmest terms Neville March Hunning's plea (Letters, April 15): "On all linguistic grounds, he is surely right. I have not myself seen the new EEC directive, but presumably my publishers have, and they would of course insist on my obeying the law (in other existing works in their bilingual series, trade marks are already respected)."

As Mr Hunning says, no law, cut stop, a trade mark, is a word or words which are used by one person or persons for the purpose of distinguishing their goods or services from those of other persons. But the process can go further when generic verbs are created: "We are having our house snowed", "Please roneo me fifty copies", "I will have it xeroxed for you", and commonest of all, "I was hoovering the floor". Presumably the well-known advertising catchphrase "Have you Macleaned your teeth today?" could, with a little pushing, produce the verb, to maclean, in a more general application. One wonders whether the original Mr Maclean ever began to say and write "maclean", and then mac, as generic terms.

Nor can I understand why the proprietors of trade marks feel threatened and seek to resort to legal protection. Is not the Hoover Company battered when its notably excellent product so dominates the market that its name becomes the generic term? As for sales: if I walk into a showroom and ask, however vaguely, to see the latest range of Hoovers, the assistant will presumably show me precisely machines bearing that

name have no right to prevent us, the members of the public, from using their names, or misusing them, in any way we choose. The editor of a dictionary, however, is of course in a particularly responsible position, and will certainly not wish to misuse or misrepresent a trade name any more than any other name or noun. His duty is to define and illustrate a word in the way in which it is commonly used and understood, and neither the EEC Commissioners nor anyone else has a right to prevent him from doing so.

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## Scene and sensibility

### Graham Reynolds

#### LOUIS HAWES

Presence of Nature: British Landscapes 1780-1830  
214pp, with illustrations.  
Yale University Press on behalf of  
Yale Center for British Art, New  
Haven. £20 (paperback, £8.95).  
0 300 02920 5

#### GERALD WILKINSON

Turner on Landscape: The Libar  
Studiosum  
128pp, with illustrations. Barrie and  
Jenkins. £16.  
0 09 14403 5

The British expressed their love of nature in literature long before their pastoral enthusiasm was revealed in their painting. We need go no further back than the seventeenth century to find a rich array of verse and prose which conveys the author's delight in the countryside. But it was not till the middle of the eighteenth century that this national tendency was reflected in the pictorial arts. Wilson and Oshabrough were true originators, and were followed by a stream of artists who, by depicting the nature around them, conveyed their deep enjoyment of its appearance and its moods.

Louisa Hawes has adopted a novel way of illustrating this sudden flowering of the national school of

landscape painting. He has chosen some 160 paintings and watercolours, landscapes of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, from the collections of the Yale Center for British Art. These he has grouped under six themes: mountain landscapes, coastal scenes, ruin landscapes, rural landscapes, landscapes with labourers and townscapes. He has omitted four other potential themes: seascapes and country house portraits, because they have recently been the subject of exhibitions at Yale; exotic and historic landscapes because they are not adequately represented in the collections. *Presence of Nature*, which accompanies his selection, is considerably more than an exhibition catalogue. It has prefaced his full and judicious entries with a lucid introduction in which he examines the origin and development of his six groups. He studies with ample literary illustration the growth of taste for mountain scenery and ruins, and traces the switch in sensibility which underlay the Romantic Movement. By showing that an additional understanding can be gained by arranging these paintings thematically he has made an important contribution to the study of this aspect of British art.

Much in his system of classification was familiar to seventeenth-century writers. Milton divided up the types of landscape by judging whether they promoted mirth or melancholy. He associated russet lawns, grey fells, trim meadows and sallow brooks with the jocund nymph of "L'Allegro",

while twilight groves, murmuring waters, and lonely cloisters were the natural haunt of the sage goddess of melancholy. The parallel between these themes and those adopted by Hawes shows that they correspond to fundamental traits of temperament.

The thinkers of the eighteenth century embarked on a lively analysis of the impact of nature on the senses and emotions. Hawes shows how the writings of Shaftesbury, Addison and Burke reveal progressive stages in the acceptance of mountains as embodiments of the sublime. Concurrently James Thomson achieved in *The Seasons* a response to the emotional effect of scenic phenomena so fundamental that the Romantic artists referred to him rather than to the Lake Poets for quotations which expressed their intentions. Painters also classified the subject-matter of their art. Alexander Cozens, described by William Beckford as being "as full of systems as the universe" codified trees, clouds and the various types of composition in nature. It is fitting that the section on mountains in this exhibition should have been dominated by the watercolours of his son John Robert Cozens. But while Milton associated mountains with the bracing jollity of his jocund nymph, J. R. Cozens found in them a reflection of his own unquiet spirit and profound melancholy.

Hawes makes the valid point that continental painters concentrated on classical ruins, while British artists were more concerned with the native ruins so liberally provided by Henry

VIII and Cromwell. None the less, watercolours of the Colosseum, the Claudian aqueduct and other time-worn relics by Pars, Towne and "Warwick" Smith are included in his selection and evoke those sentiments of the transitory character of greatness which led Gibbon, seeing these ruins, to embark on his history of the fall of Rome. The most impressive painting in this group is Constable's "Hadleigh Castle". This may seem strange in view of the artist's frequent assertions that he valued only health and vigour, and disliked stagnation and autumnal decay. But special reasons enhanced the emotional force of this painting. Constable was mourning the early death of his wife and his distress, combined with his failure to gain proper recognition, led him to regard this ruin as the symbol of his own life.

He figures more predictably as the chief exponent of rural landscape. However his opinion that pastoral landscape was the most lovely as well as the most difficult department of painting was not shared by the theorists of picturesque taste. Hawes cites Gilpin's pronouncement that "on canvas, hedge-row elms, furrowed lands, meadows . . . and hayfields adorned with mowers have a bad effect. . . . Of all species of cultivation, cornlands are the most unpicturesque. The regularity of corn-fields disgusts", thus utterly rejecting the basic subject-matter of Constable's art.

Hawes's new category of "Landscapes with Labourers" includes scenes of industrial activity, such as Turner's "Limekiln at Coalbrookdale" and De Loutherbourg's "View near Mottistoun". Other paintings in this section are only marginally differentiated from the purely rural by the slightly more prominent presence of the figures. I think Hawes is wrong to question Constable's right to quote "with smiling brow the ploughman cleaves his way" in the title of his "Ploughing Scene in Suffolk". The author of the lines, Robert Bloomfield, had been a farmer's boy, and knew what he was talking about. Equally Constable, as a dyed-in-the-wool countryman, would have been fully aware that ploughmen, or more properly horsemen, were so proud and independent breed who took great pride in their work. The ploughman would have been smiling because he was delighting in the regularity of his Suffolk furrows, and because he felt in harmony with nature and his team of horses, which were his constant responsibility.

Hawes disclaims any intention of

drawing excessively rigid lines of demarcation. Clearly some of his choice could be placed under other headings. Copley Fielding's "Scene on the coast, Merionethshire" which makes such a dramatic cover and out-coast scene and a ruin painting as well as a coast scene. But by setting categories Hawes has clarified the complex history of the emergence of landscape as a dominant genre in nineteenth-century British painting. In the face of academic opposition it triumphed over history painting and the Grand Manner because it engaged human sympathies on so many different levels.

Turner is the only artist to be represented in all six groups at Yale. Not only did he aspire to take all known modes of painting as his province, he himself made a systematic classification of types of landscape. His division into pastoral, epic pastoral, marine, architectural, mountain, and historical landscape has obvious affinities with the scheme underlying *Presence of Nature*. Turner on Landscape is an examination by Gerald Wilkinson of the "Libar Studiosum" in which Turner demonstrated his analysis. Wilkinson confesses that he felt initial dislike for the engravings of the "Libar" and says that his subsequent enthusiasm came from discerning a deeper meaning in the publication. He suggests that each single part of five prints has a unifying theme; for instance that the first part illustrates "bridges and connections", the third "solid geometry". It is this thesis I fear it is doomed. Indeed for many of Turner's admirers it must always remain a mystery how he, who was so responsive to the finest nuances in oil or watercolour, could tolerate, let alone propagate, the coarse colour, the insensitive chiaroscuro, and the banal printing of these depressing plates.

A pictorial index, in which all plates can be seen in one opening, is a useful feature of this book. It reveals that the search for a unifying theme in each published part is as chimerical as the search for the golden section, which the author also discerns in Turner's compositions. It does however establish that Turner was fully consistent in representing most of his categories in each part. All in all, this study will not convince those who believe that Constable was right to call Turner's publication the "Libar Studiosum".

considerable critical success. DeWint seems to have been rather sloof and uncommunicative, and the details of his life remain obscure. This is the first full-scale study for nearly a century, and it provides an ample and excellent framework for the understanding of the painter's career, difficult as it is to reconstruct on the basis of the words alone, whose chronology is only just beginning to be unravelled. Smith is happiest when he is dealing with his chief subject, his handling of the painter's aesthetic and social context is less secure, but it is also very brief. Since direct or circumstantial information about the artist's life is so scarce, more might have been made of the connection with DeWint's close friend and, later, brother-in-law, William Hilton, a history-painter whose own watercolour sketches of landscapes have a decidedly DeWint-like breadth, and whose visit to Italy in 1825, recently examined by Martin Pointon (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXV, 1972), throws some light on the style of DeWint's most ambitious watercolour, the "Billab" exhibited four years later, but now known only through preparatory studies. Hilton was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Italian landscape, which he interpreted very much in terms of Claude, and it was to Franco-Roman models of that type that DeWint looked.

In spite of the distinction of his work, his varied and extensive clientele as a teacher, and a

## Freshest fieldscapes

### John Gage

#### HAMMOND SMITH

Peter DeWint 1784-1849  
195pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. F. Lewis. £35.  
0 85317 057 6

Of all the masters of the great age of English watercolour painting, Peter DeWint is perhaps the purest exponent of that medium. In his finest works the rich, saturated washes brushed firmly on to a rugged and absorbent paper, bloomy and undisturbed, and wholly the product of the dry or loaded brush, seem to us to be the quintessence of that fascinating technique which, when he applied it to oil, seems vivid and contrived. DeWint was, with Cotman, the truest heir of Thomas Girtin, but far more even than Girtin or Cotman, he took watercolour away from topography and into a more expansive view of the landscape as above all a matter of light and breezes, of earth, air and water, of flora and fauna. He was one of the most travelled of English landscape artists, and this, paradoxically, gives a certain placelessness to his work, expressed in an entirely non-illusionistic manner. It is especially apt that DeWint should have given his name to a painting material: a type of coarse watercolour paper.

Contemporary admirers, like the poet, John Clare and, later, Ruskin,

felt that the secret of this freshness was DeWint's practice of painting out of doors: Clare begged the painter for one of those rough sketches taken in the fields that breathes with the living freshness of open air and sunshine where the blending and harmony of earth air and sky are in such happy union of greens and greys that a flat bit of scenery on a few inches a paper appear [sic] so many miles.

And Ruskin, who seems to have known the artist well, held that DeWint "hardly ever paints except from nature". But Hammond Smith, in this fine study, shows that it was not quite as simple as that. DeWint seems to have avoided those refinements in the development of the medium of watercolour in his day which would have made on-the-spot sketching easier, for he rarely practised it. It is certainly difficult to see how he could have laid his liquid and direct washes without placing his stretched paper flat, and free from the winds and animal disturbances of outdoor work. The larger drawings were always studio productions, and in the memoir by his wife, which is usefully reprinted in the present book, it is stated that DeWint "commenced his drawings on a Friday" (his lucky day), which suggests that the cunning manipulation of washes extended over a protracted period.

In spite of the distinction of his work, his varied and extensive clientele as a teacher, and a

hundred, eighty-three, in 1811, young in wisdom though the old to quarrel with poverty, the old to (unscripted) go the wilderness I know the give me grit to write as if I were the object, not the show of reputation in this life.

In my fathers' name, profess in music, cadence, rhyme, and to the present mob confess to simpler times - Chaucer's tales and Villon's crimes, the sacred fire that Herbert wrought in his sacrificial lines, in his Irish argonaut.

In my mothers' memory I give that panoply of wit which turned, in style, on tyranny (the Beatrice on Beodict) the devil check that conquered it. The Emily I praise, George, Jane, and from the Sixties' squalid pit, the who kept me sane.

In this season of the goat the stamps my passage with his sign, the wind howls from its wolf's throat, the windows weep with ice or rain, in me set down in words as plain as Villon's stanza will allow the legacy that in my name I like to leave the world I know.

My heart - which signifies that I've loved and, loving, wish to leave from this hive of lies the lived in since ambition kissed me into my quietness - in Michael Parley, poet-fool, the rumpled boy, the slanted light - Ablutions for us puritans.

To Andrew Motion, any fama that to my this books may adhere like sheep's wool to a barbed-wire fence. "The" reputation for high-down fidelity to Flair who in the Oxford lists has been the only poet to prefer the world to the seashrine.

To Bala and Reid (the Marlan lot) My recipe for onion soup. To see that what the North East's got that fresh pass may be spared the pot that treated as befits the group. When autumn, well brought up, with simple, short, three-minute heating, served an *oeuvre*, but sans trop trope, it can be a delicious eating.

Booth its Gutenberg's there snore leave every onion stows in layers and layers of metaphor; in boil them out like steins from clothes. More you add the salt and Beaulieu. But why should I repeat what every kitchen poet knows? Spice well, and throw away the meat.

And, since the boys have set up court so quietly in the scullery, We girls, why not may now depart To sit in the academy. Here in the grill, the sink, the tea, The colander to catch the drags. And here's (for an emergency) That thing we use to time the eggs.

Do wait. I'll turn and name the rich accumulations of my plots. From Donald Hall (Ann Arbor, Mich.) I learned my trade. To him, too late, I gave my green, inebriate. My veteran anxiousness to please. My appetite for appetite. My love affair with Lymeswold chase.

To Glasgow - how I curse the place - I have a midden of regrets, A name I should have worn with grace (shouted out) in bitter cigarettes. The poet can rectify the debts my madness, mixed with alcohol, incurred in sundry totemants. About the academic brawl.

And yet, if I can make my peace With Philip Hobbs, in whose book No Structuralism found increase Nor foolish Hermeneutic took The liberty of playlog hook To literary accolades - Well, then I will. He never took His flag down from the barricades.

Still, if I had to say which were The saddest of my salad years, The time I'd give back, with a purr, To some great *Laureat* in the spheres, I think I'd wear Glaswegian tears For Tom and Liz and Angus, whose Subversive talents warmed their bears And talked the curse off college booze.

By Tentsmull's Tayport, where the Tay Spills out in salty, spatulate Redundancies of tidal clay, I buried all that out-of-date Hysteria of want and hate. In Fife I count among my friends The spumey boy, the slanted light - Ablutions for us puritans.

With Geoffrey Dutton, Aloo Wall, Anne, Ellie, Monty, dour Bill Tait Who outdrank and out-owled us all, Those Seagate days I celebrate From David's Fort to Nethergate. Down here I can't use all my vice; I'll leave you half, in case some fate Decides Dundee deserves me twice.

To Douglas Dunn, who was a Scot Before he was a poet - eyes To see that what the North East's got that fresh pass may be spared the pot that treated as befits the group. When autumn, well brought up, with simple, short, three-minute heating, served an *oeuvre*, but sans trop trope, it can be a delicious eating.

Or watch the shoduck, dunlin, turns Perform their ritual antic roles. Where water meets the sand and churns On every beachy prominence Topographies of innocence. You call me a Romantic? I'm Too old to frown or take offence. We live in a diminished time.

The mloor English slip their verse From sherry glasses as they talk. Fearful of spirit, they endorse The safe and unpretentious bloke Who slips a knowing little joke Between big gulps of mum and dad And nips of sweetened back-yard folk. I wish the outlandish were all to make.

Something in poetry goes wrong When poets tacitly agree There's nothing more to say in song. Our journalists and linguists' plea: For unrestricted novelty Shores up the bits, but shreds the whole. O where is that great-rooted tree Yeats made a symbol of the soul?

To Peter and Pangelop Whose wise, outlandish confidence In holiness and witchery Upholds the Poet/Vision sense. That's peddled in the TLS. I leave one caution: Satan makes A plausible honey in his pest; Don't treat him like a friend of Blake's.

## A Legacy

On my fiftieth birthday

By Anne Stevenson

Near Hay I think Traherne and Vaughan Are angels in that border air. My Jealous, buttock Oxford toogee Dried up while I was living there. My *panor* *ame* began to tear The bars down from inside its cage. And black theatrical despair Rose like a curtain from a stage.

I don't mean evil isn't real. Dear God, things hardly could be worse. The tragedy is that we feel Important when we preach in verse Or march to mitigate the curse Of mass greed, hatred and the Bomb. We fear a vacant universe, Yet Yeats's Chinamen were calm.

To Roger Garfit, all my strolls Along the Wye - to write his book. To Flash and Spark, the rabbit holes Poor Guinness wistfully forsook. Glenn Storhaug, once you undertook To speak in printing, you became So indisputable you put Commercial publishing to shame.

From every proof you pull, I learn. Dear friend, I leave you and your press This deep-sworn promise to return. To Allen Halsey, too, success For poetry. And happiness In Broad Street's number twenty-two. (I hope we never have to meet With real estate again, don't you?)

To John, my son, who at sixteen Bids fair to beat a man-of-war drum. Thee my public star I've seen, I love the music I've become. Too deaf to hear or profit from. I'd give him every hour I've known Of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven. If he could give me back one tune.

You, Charles, must take what voice I can Dredge up from years of broken roles. License the beat, or let it scan, But shun the literary fools Whose verses reek of clichés and schools. Nor let the poet fight the heart. The only clean and honest tools Are truth, good whisky, and good art.

Aod love, of course, which at the start I meant to make the heroine Of this homage *The Devil's Part* Set off in France. Ah, *cher Villon*, They tell me that my woman's tongue Must dredge my womb to find its root. That voice in the masculine. That voice in the feminine.

I'd rather be e pagen sucked At some outlandish creed, absurd, Than be lodubly fucked And have to find another word. I don't like 'poet's moll' or 'bird'. But 'chavins' and 'sexist war' - Dragged in to keep the anger stirred - Are just as twisted at the core.

This haunts me - this profound belief That what's between us and you makes In this Anatomy of Grief Is *affirmation* to all its veils. I think of Gillian in Wales, Of Jeremy, of Robert Walls, Of Frances Horowitz's trials; God spare them equally my hell.

To Caroline, my daughter, who's A quarter century to my half. I leave my hard-won stoic views, My stillness, to make her laugh; Also this three-line epitaph: Here lies a mother who, in flame Of life, lost all its grin. O chaff Be charitable to her name.

To my good and loyal Guinness, this: A bouquet of assorted sticks That connoisseur of canine piss Cao take on wet, olfactory walks. To both my cats, a furry box Of heart-and-kidney flavoured spice. Also my conscience, so those crooks Won't catch my friends, the birds and mice.

To all my students in this age Of terror masked as arrogance When self-regarding verbiage Is mostly personal defence, I leave my tender defence To poets older than the Bomb Who temper grief with assonance And wist, if dearly paid for, calm.

Still thriving in the English rain Are Anne's the Oxford angels keep. Both Peter Levi and John Wain Can tell a poet from a sleazebag. If Yeats and Dylan from their sleep Could rise, with Auden, to renew The talk they wanted to repeat, John Heath-Stubbs, they would come to you.

To Geoffrey Hill, awe and applause For your great homage to Péguy. You wring from tight prosodic lewz Such music, such profundity The moving words forget to be Pieces of language and become Sacred or tools. So clearly Imbues with grace your finest poem.

To Tom, a river full of praise That he may fish and find his trout Symbolic, simple and oblate. With cleansing blood to write about. My Oxford, though, is not without Its unwashed corpse, black with much Suspicion, prejudice and doubt. Wounds still too resistent to touch.

Cambridge that gave me birth and name, Magnat, unmerciful and strong, In which I found girl-love, grown-shame, In which I'll die, unless I'm wrong About where human souls belong. Twice you have been my home, but three Is the number drawn and drawn In my self-casting constantly.

And so, as Lady Memory Undoes the clasps of her *armoire*, Unfolds my splotchy identity And, piece by piece, my repertoire Of gross mistakes - by which we are Defined and moulded by the Muse - I thank her that I've come this far And have so little left to lose.

If I were Berryman I'd swear That Villon visited my sleep. But I'm no Bell's Heaulmière. I doo't think I'd be Villon's type. Nevertheless, I think some deep Affinity of drink or rhyme (Plus how we rarely earn our keep) Links poet in a ring of time.

The best of everything the world Affords, and therefore coins as grace - Success etc. - is curtailed By wild defects of sex and race. The devil's fart is from his face. I praise some *patric* *ma* - odd, For it's a state but not a place - I call it "Listening for God".

As for my eyes, my ears, my teeth, The little lusts that live therein, They can dissolve like salt beneath The ink and paper of my skin. For now and since the glacier's been The boulder clay brings down the stones. The tide pulls out, the tide pulls in. So may a white sea wash my bones.

UP 11-150



# Gravitating to the graveyard

John Lucas

ANDREW SANDERS  
Charles Dickens Resurrectionist  
238pp. Macmillan. £17.50.  
0 353 30727 5

"Death is the trigger of the literary man's biggest gun," Empson famously remarked and Dickens would probably have agreed with him. Indeed, his fiction may seem to us overmuch possessed by the "distinguished thing". But then death, and especially untimely or unlooked-for death, was a vividly present fact of Victorian life, and novels that dealt with contemporary society were required to be true-to-death, so to say. In his essay on "Civilization," Mill noted that

"To most people in easy circumstances, any pain (except accident, disease or emotional disturbance) is rather a thing known of than actually experienced. This is much more emphatically true in the more refined classes, and as refinement advances; for it is in keeping as far as possible out of sight, not actual pain, but all that can be offensive or disagreeable to the most sensitive person, that refinement exists."

But no matter how refined you might be, death was always within sight. Nothing brought the Victorian family together like the death of one of its members. Besides, death was a mystery that could strike anyone, anywhere, at any time. It is therefore absurd to imagine as some commentators have done, that untimely death in Dickens's novels can be sufficiently explained by the trauma he suffered over the sudden death of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth. Fatal diseases were all around, as Andrew Sanders points out in the opening chapter of his study of Dickens's interest in death, and even among the well-to-do there were deaths on a scale we can scarcely imagine. Dickens makes good imaginative use of the fact that nobody was very sure of what caused such diseases and that the remedies usually failed. In his novels, early death often becomes a powerful metaphor of emotionally starved or insufficient lives. The death of Paul Dombey, for example, tells us infinitely more about

Dombey's notion of destiny, his frozen rectitude and fear of love, than it does about the inadequacies of Victorian medicine.

The high mortality rates also had much to do with the conditions in which the majority of city-dwellers were forced to live. Dickens makes less of this than Elizabeth Gaskell, but the death of Jo in *Bleak House* is an unforgettable *tour-de-force*, impressive both for the colossal energy of his writing about the death itself and for the precise anger with which Dickens turns on "Your majesty", and those who appear to sanction or accept such conditions. City life breeds an atomistic society, terrifying in its anonymity, its lack of community relationships. City deaths can therefore become the token of strictly meaningful, because unknowable and unknown, existences. To die alone has a new, horrific resonance in Dickens's novels, as the death of Nemo suggests. Moreover, such a death is literally unmarked. The body is thrown into a pauper's grave, and city burial-grounds, over-loaded with half-rotting corpses which have constantly to be tampered down to make room for others, stink of decay, unhouse bones and the ways of rats. It is all there in *Bleak House*.

Elsewhere in the novels Dickens relishes his loathing of that inevitable growth-industry of Victorian times, the undertaker's business, with its creep and creep, paid mourners, joyless pretence at ceremony, would-be pomp and respectability. Dr Sanders has a good section on Dickens's enraging distaste of funeral "gammon" although he rather neglects to account for the fact that Dickens clearly enjoyed inventing characters such as Mould and Sowerberry. This is perhaps because he is keen to argue that Dickens was a good Christian and therefore wished to place the meaning of death within the Christian scheme of things. Here, I beg to feel rather blank. Dickens is clearly not to be identified with an Epicurean or Patenian view of death. It could not be for him the Mother of Beauty. And although he might have agreed with Forster that death destroys a man, the idea of death saves him, he cannot be claimed for a liberal humanist outlook, since he had what no liberal humanist can have, a powerful sense of evil.

Yet Dickens's Christianity, in spite of being, or perhaps because of being vehemently expressed, always seems to me a kind of despairing good-heartedness. "I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here and there." One can imagine Jowett nodding approval over that passage from Dickens's will, but then, as has often enough been pointed out, Jowett's Broad Church movement is so wide as to defeat sensible definition. Sanders says that Dickens disliked narrow sectarianism and it is true, he did; and he was often very funny at its expense. (Unfairly so, according to Valentine Cunningham.) But he also had a contempt for speculative thought which at its worst comes close to rivaling Kingsley's philistine bluster. I cannot see that Christianity is either a subtle or a significant element in his novels, and I do not think it much affects his treatment of death. Sanders disagrees. Dickens "seems to have regarded as essential for death-bed scenes: hope, comfort, and room for repentance." Well, yes, but leaving aside the question of whether these constitute a specifically Christian view of the matter there is the fact, which Sanders himself importantly establishes, that "the religiously charged death-bed, used as a moral invention of the Victorians. Even its exploitation in evangelical tracts, teetotal lantern-slides, popular ballads, and mawkish sentimental poetry shows something of a continuity with the previous century." Dickens does not always renounce a tradition he inherits, and I would say that the hope, comfort and room for repentance which he puts into some of his death-bed scenes often feels routine or to be a baffled and perhaps failing attempt to force significance onto them.

This is not to deny that he was preoccupied with death. It is, however, to say that the absorption of artists in whatever feeds their art cannot always be explained in a manner that will satisfy the pure-hearted Dickens protesting against public executions, but he witnessed one. So did Hardy, and as Sanders remarks, Hardy saw nothing odd in taking his newly-married wife on a visit to the Paris Morgue where Dickens had been a

frequent visitor. On one of his visits Dickens records how "I was attracted to, to see an old man lying all alone on his celled bed, with a tap of water turned on over his grey hair, and running, drip, drip, drip down his wretched face until it got to the corner of his mouth, where it took a turn, and made him look sly". Sanders comments on this that Dickens "seems to have considered it perfectly acceptable to both divert and chill his readers with such meditations on mortality". But in the passage in question Dickens is not meditating, he is observing, and the observation is a good deal more vivid than the meditations on death which he customarily provides in his novels and which I will agree are dressed up in loose Christian language. (Just as Browning's study of the suicides in his great poem "Apparent Failure", which is also set in the Paris Morgue, is a good deal more vivid than the deliberately trite meditation with which the poem ends.) I think Dickens seems to have taken his death-bed meditations very seriously and he was pleased when others were comforted by his words. Yet he valuably emerges from the routine of tradition when he focuses on the dead body and its surroundings, and I cannot see anything particularly Christian about the ways he does that. Sanders says that one of the messages of Dickens's concern with death is that "life must go on". Never mind must, it

does. That is why about suffering they were never wrong, the old masters.

There is, however, the matter of dying. It is not, I think, one where Dickens often shows to advantage. As Sanders justly remarks, Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich* is scarcely paralleled in the literature of Western Europe in the nineteenth century, and certainly not in England, for it examines the process of dying from the point of view of the dying man rather than from that of the bystanders at the death-bed. To say that is to hint at what is wrong or anyway limited in Dickens's handling of death. Not always: one of the greatest moments in his fiction has to do with the dying Mrs Skewton, a woman whose ruthless egotism prohibits any possibility of imaginative vision, so that when she is wheeled down to the sea she observes only "a vast desolation between earth and sky". Yet Dickens more readily pretends to examine the process of dying in children, and these scenes and their main protagonists are lavishly stuffed with the kinds of thought, reflections and homiletic remarks that call to mind the writings of Hannah More. As such they are an efface against the true functioning of imagination and I can understand why Oscar Wilde thought that he must have a heart of stone who can read of the death of Little Nell without laughing.

## Decidedly undecidable

Richard Brown

BERNARD BENSTOCK (Editor)

The Seventh of Joyce

267pp. Brighton: Harvester. £25.  
0 7108 0443 1

In one of the more Wildean moments of Joyce's otherwise intensely Isenstent play *Exiles* Robert Hand makes this epigrammatic distinction between two types of statue: "the statue which says: *How shall I get down?*" and the other kind, "the statue which says: *In my time the downhill was so high.*" If academic publications may be classified according to these categories, without any disrespect, then this volume of essays serves the function of the latter kind of statue.

It is a collection of papers delivered at the Seventh International Joyce Symposium held in Zurich in 1979 and, as such, offers an indication of the state of Joycean academic progress at that time. The book has ten sections each containing four short essays and suggests a lively range of approaches to the texts in question. Contributors address themselves to questions of great generality, such as "Joyce and Recent Narrative Theory"; they make literary comparisons between Joyce and Beckett and Joyce and Faulkner; there are discussions of the relationships between Joyce and Freud and Joyce and Modern Science and thematic approaches, such as "Joyce and Judaism" and "Joyce and Sex".

Even when the essays apply themselves to particular problems the heterogeneity of their interests is apparent. Three papers offered in explanation of a single passage of *Finnegans Wake* may serve as examples here. The first opens: "the encounter of ECE and the Cad is the encounter of the Father and Son"; the second has it that: "the passage begins with a matrix of woman/mother allied to different places"; and the third (as if from a different planet) asks: "What are the historical elements immediately implicit in the context of this passage?" "Explanation has many faces but a single purpose, to produce an increase of understanding," claims the "chair person" of this "workshop", leaving us to wonder if that "increase" is, or should be, of a quantitative or of a qualitative kind.

J. Hills Miller, the most distinguished non-Joycean contributor, whose paper at the Symposium itself played elaborately with the term "anastomosis", is represented here by a much shorter

piece on the relationship between Joyce and literary theory. His argument brushes with *Ulysses* at one point, referring to Stephen Dedalus crushing the shells on the beach at Sandymount. Miller "would like to know whether, for Joyce, those shells, the traces of history, are the remaining signs of some heaven of archetypes or whether the reading makes them signs and they are in themselves mere gross earth and 'heaps of dead language'." "Nothing could be more important than to decide about this," he is alarmingly adding. Those readers who despair of ever reaching the end of *Ulysses* if they need to apply so original, abstract and subtle an attention to every one of its many thousands of words may take some succour from his conclusion that such questions "mean, after all, he undecidable".

Though there are essays (like Jean Kimball's refreshing account of Joyce's use of Freud) which add to our knowledge of Joyce's writings in a traditional way, many in this collection endorse Hills Miller's insistence on "undecidability", even if they do not choose to use the term. Thus on the panels, which attempted to deal specifically with interpretations of *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*, there seem to be as many voices which question abstractly the possibility of interpretation as there are those who try to put it into practice. Philip Herring has a particularly interesting account of those characteristics of language in *Dubliners* which seem to sustain such a vast number of possible psycho-allegorical readings. Essays on Joyce and Beckett and Joyce and Faulkner likewise choose to conduct themselves as discussions of authorial omniscience or narrative self-generation in effect as they choose to deal with specific historical or critical connections between the authors' works.

There is an enthusiasm for new approaches which is both attractive and characteristic of the event. The brevity and generality of many of the papers may not always seem well-suited to book-style presentation, but *The Seventh of Joyce* at least offers an introduction to the kind of genuinely open and often highly productive exchange that can take place at such gatherings. Despite the fact, then, that it appears more than three years after the occasion, that many of the papers have been re-shaped and re-ordered and that (despite claims to be "International") all but two of the contributors are Americans, it is a moment in the history of Joyce studies and as a record of an academic exchange that his book must be valued. Within these limits the editor and publishers have made an attractively produced and worthwhile book.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

# Leave it to the experts

Zygmunt Bauman

WILLIAM OUTHWAITE

Concept Formation in Social Science  
206pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£12.50.  
0 7100 3195 8

For natural scientists spend sleepless nights worrying about the rules which govern the formation of their concepts; for few social scientists, and their philosopher friends, do. Such a strikingly different degree of concern about what, by all accounts, is one of the most important of all scientists, is surprising and invites an explanation.

Of such explanations, indeed, there has been no shortage in our century. All agree on the obvious: time and effort devoted to the solution of a problem tend to grow with the latter's complexity, hence the fascination of social scientists with the way their concepts are formed surely reflects the greater difficulty that they encounter in performing the task common to all sciences. Apart from this well-known commonsensical point, however, the explanations differ widely. Most of them may be assigned to one of two broad classes: explanations which point to the peculiarity of the object of social-scientific study, its "complexity", whatever this might mean; its "meaning-saturation"; its "subjectivity", or dependence on individual meanings, definitions of situations, cultural values, etc.; its inaccessibility to normal scientific methodological procedures, particularly experimentation; and so on; and explanations which focus on the peculiarity of social scientists themselves and their collective endeavour—on either their ambiguous status as being simultaneously both "in" and "out" of the society they study, or on the "immaturity" of their science, which may be overcome by depending on the appropriate efforts being made.

William Outhwaite's book falls, by and large, into the second category, though the author is well aware of the other types of argument and surveys with a truly amazing facility the whole of the century-long discussion. It is Outhwaite's firmly held belief that the notorious absence of a universally

accepted conceptual core in social science, and of commonly agreed standards by which such core-concepts could be selected, has been engendered in no small measure by confusion as to the exact epistemological status of social-scientific concepts; and that the resulting disarray could be largely rectified, if only social scientists were to embrace the right philosophy of science and recognize the true nature of scientific concepts.

In about 150 pages of basic text (and almost half that number of detailed footnotes) Outhwaite compresses a breath-taking amount of information about the explicit and implicit philosophies which vie for influence over social-scientific practice. Very little of importance has been omitted and the book will certainly be used for years to come as an up-to-date, comprehensive source of reference to philosophical controversies in contemporary social sciences. The major tenets and tacit premises of the main philosophical contenders (positivism and phenomenology) are thoroughly examined and systematically presented, and their inherent limitations and sometimes creative, sometimes incapacitating contradictions convincingly exposed.

Outhwaite himself spurns both positivism and the phenomenologically inspired philosophies of social science, since "neither of these alternatives allows an escape from relativism". If, indeed, sciences themselves constitute their object domain, and if theoretical knowledge is a part of human practice in general, then "it becomes vital that we have the 'right' concepts and theories". Reconciling oneself to the inevitability of relativism, or - worse still - celebrating the intrinsic relativism of all social knowledge, would be tantamount to a surrender of social-scientific responsibility. This is one possibility Outhwaite will not accept and it was the very desire to state it off which inspired the time-consuming research project of which this book is the impressive product.

For his guides Outhwaite has chosen a recent version of rationalism as represented in the work of Martin Hilis and Deryck Beyleveld, and above all the realist theory of science expounded in an influential book by Roy Bhaskar. Realism, naturalism and rationalism are, in Outhwaite's view,

the only, even if they are not perfect, weapons we can (and should) employ in combating the dilemma of relativism which hides in the positivist and hermeneutical closets. If social knowledge is ever to raise itself to the status of a science, it must staunchly refuse to accept its own relativism. Instead, it must embrace, as its heuristic principles, precepts incorporated in the rationalist-realist model of science; such as that definitions should attempt to capture in words the real essences of things; that things exist and act independently of our descriptions; that rationality-assumptions are essential to social science; that those theories should be preferred which can explain more; etc.

The case Outhwaite makes for the practicality of such principles and the feasibility of applying them to the objects of social-scientific inquiry, in spite of their notorious idiosyncrasies, is strong and convincing. What is much less convincing, unfortunately, is the hope that paying homage in this way to the philosophical creed which such principles manifest will go some way towards making sociology and its adjacent disciplines into a "normal science". The hope would be warranted, were the internal divisions, the lack of cumulative laws, the theoretical disarray and other notorious peculiarities of the social sciences attributable solely to the special traits of their object or, better still, to the philosophical ignorance of their practitioners. But is this the case?

Max Weber once wrote that each science "must want to go" beyond daily experience, "for this is precisely the basis of its right to exist as a science". Gaston Bachelard spoke of the "epistemological break" with common sense which is the birthmark of science - the break which occurs once scientific books no longer start by referring to, but instead by invoking a specialist theory or concept unknown in everyday language or "non-specialist" thought. Foucault includes among the crucial defining attributes of any "discursive formation" underlying the continuity of science, the "rites" from which statements must be made if they are to be acknowledged as "scientifically relevant".

What acts scientific knowledge apart from ordinary thinking is not so much a distinctive subject-matter or a peculiar

methodology, as the distillation of science from universally accessible, commonsensical experience. Science is thus autonomous. It sustains unchallenged the collective authority of specialist knowledge by rendering it impervious to non-specialist intervention. One could, symbolically, date modern science to the moment when Galileo put a telescope between his eye and the sun - and thus entered a field of experience which the naked, non-specialist eye cannot penetrate. It is a long way from the sun-spots which Galileo saw through his primitive optical tube and the splashes on the screen of the cyclotron which constitute the experience processed by today's nuclear physics, but it is a way that has led consistently in the same direction: away from the "form of life" which the layman can claim competence.

One can argue that the notorious inability of social science to set its own house in order (as defined by the standards of modern science) is ultimately founded not so much on the peculiarity of its object or the philosophical backwardness of its practitioners, as on its distinct *social* status (a fact only too easily concealed by the similarity of *institutional* status between social and natural sciences within universities). Social science, as it were, never truly entered on the road along which the natural sciences have travelled. A reputable social scientist tries to validate his judgments by reference to an experience much wider than his ordinary daily practice may supply - but however ample, the experience he processes remains qualitatively identical with the one accessible in principle to any member of society. The privileged status of social-scientific wisdom is not, therefore, unproblematically assured by the collective monopoly of social scientists over the "universe of facts" they study. They thus find it difficult to speak with an authority comparable to that of natural scientists.

No wonder, therefore, that they

should set such store by their rules of concept-formation and philosophical grounding, since in social science rules are called on to carry a responsibility unheard of elsewhere: to validate an authority which other scientists derive from their control over the realm of experience within which, and of which, their judgments are forged.

Can methodology, on its own, however, generate the needed confrontations? Outhwaite does not confront this critical question. Perhaps the major weakness of his book is that it is itself so un-sociological in its diagnoses, prescriptions and hopes. Viewed sociologically, the long, inconclusive methodological debate in and around social science does not present itself as a story of errors and blunders, to be rectified by an infusion of sound philosophical thinking. Has the unending search not been prompted rather by a continuous situation of cognitive dissonance (speaking with "expert authority" is a mark of the scientist; but our statements as social scientists continue to be contested - with success - from quarters we do not recognize as expert), and by the resolve to draw a clear and universally respected line dividing expert knowledge from mere opinion? If this is our objective, then Neurath's programme for an artificial language is the only conceivable strategy of radical separation between the two. Its failure exposed the only too often forgotten truth that language on its own cannot generate an autonomous "form of life", unless it is grounded in a self-contained practice.

Would the precepts of realist philosophy, however commendable and well outlined to a scientific conscience and amply fare any better? As Wittgenstein dependently wrote, "philosophy leaves everything as it is", and in a moment of similar premonition, Outhwaite writes: "(It) is not clear that their [realist philosophers'] solutions are more than verbal ones". Indeed.

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## Quintessentially honest

John Thompson

J. R. HAMMOND

A George Orwell Companion: A guide to the novels, documentaries and essays  
278pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0 353 28666 5

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a retrospective novel; Orwell thought that any other sort could not properly be written: "It is very unlikely that any novel, i.e. worth reading, would ever be set back less than three years at least." On its publication he tried to discourage futuristic interpretations.

But the slender connection between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and 1984 is to supply the reason for the coming year of celebration, which offers threats and promises for Orwell studies. A consolidation of the Orwell mythology is threatening. We are likely to hear more, from some celebrants, of Orwell as the man who saw the folly of the Left from the Left and meant to hand over, as Frederick Warburg thought he might, "a cool million votes to the Conservative party". This is a major error; Orwell was surprised and distressed by the "very shame-making publicity" given *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by the American Right, which assumed the British Labour Party was under attack.

We may be told too, as J. R. Hammond tells us in his *George Orwell Companion* - largely a book of biographical summary and topographical criticism - that Orwell was "quintessentially English" despite Raymond Williams's persuasive view of him as an Englishman only by affiliation. Was

Orwell "quintessentially English" in his conscientious acquisition of native languages for a policeman in Burma? Or in his involvement with the International Literary activity in Paris in the 1920s, idealizing Joyce for breaking the "narrow padded world" of Georgian English-literary endowment? Or in his shouldering the responsibility of an International Socialist in Spain and calling for a "Socialist United States of Europe"?

The Orwell mythology is compounded from selections: those of Orwell himself, his widow, his critics, and most especially his readers. Orwell sometimes told us only what he thought we should know; his widow and editor withheld material that would have diversified our appreciation of him. Many critics have dealt obsessively with only a limited number of passages and ideas, while readers commonly restrict their attentions to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*. Some tidy judgments have been made and are ready for disruption. Thus the promise for 1984 is Peter Davison's edition of the complete corpus.

Orwell was an absorbent and synthetic writer and the sources of his ideas, the connective points between his huge reading and derivative writings, still need research. Hammond's contribution is an intimate knowledge of H. O. Wells. Orwell could express his debt to Wells only as a son to a father and, bizarrely, as a fictional character to his author: "It is not a sort of parricide for a person of my age (thirty-eight) to find fault with H. O. Wells." Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells's own creation. "Orwell is attending to his ideological nativity, identifying himself

as a child of his time. Even so, it is more important to Hammond's thesis to present Orwell as himself a father: 'seminal' is a word to which he continually returns.

Properly understood it is a good perspective. Anthony Burgess's 1985 and Kingsley Amis's *Russian Hide and Seek* are extensions in a familiar tradition from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, just as Orwell's novel was from Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes* and Zamyatin's *We*. But the probability is that Orwell's contribution to the culture of 1984 will be generally perceived as a moral one.

In a war-time essay, "Writers and Society," Cyril Connolly suggested an additional canon, a Word Controller, who would draw up an Index of "forbidden clichés with a scale of fines." The Controller would soon discover, Connolly tells us, "that there is a connection between the rubbish written... and the thoughts of people, and he would endeavour to use his censorship of words in such a way as to effect the ideas behind them, or rather, he would give priority to statements of fact over abstractions".

Orwell's later, kindred, essay "Politics and the English Language", remarks Connolly's point: "the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." The literary-world most relied on in some departments of Orwell criticism, is apparent: facile, always available as an alternative to taking thought or looking at the text. Perhaps, to use an expression of Orwell's, it can be jeered out of print for a while, together with "quixotic", "prophetic", "salutary", "virtuous", "generously angry", and of course, "quintessentially English".

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